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DISCOURSES

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ON

THREE ESSENTIAL PROPERTIES

OF THE

GOSPEL-REVELATION,

Which demonstrate its DIVINE ORIGINAL.

WITH

A Caution against INFIDELITY, addressed to Youth.

AND

A Supplemental DISCOURSE on the supernatural
Conception of JESUS CHRIST.

By CALEB FLEMING, D. D. *K.*

Make it plain upon Tables, that he may run that readeth it.

HABAKKUK.

All shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

JEHOVAH.

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*A Caution against Infidelity: Addressed
to the rising Age.*

YOU who are in earlier life, be pleased to consider yourselves as peculiarly interested in such Caution; since it is probable that the fate of Britain will much depend upon your religious or infidel complexion. And, moreover, the attempt made to throw the light of evidence, cannot be supposed to do much service to the well-informed believer in revelation; and the numerous unbelievers will admit of no information, so thick is the veil over their minds, that however repeatedly their objections have been fully answered, they retain sceptical cavils, and fanciful distastes to the evidence. Even so confirmed are their prejudices, that they can suppose prophecy and miracle never had any existence. Their most admired publications are written with an air of unaccountable assurance.

But the more effectually to intrench themselves, and colour over a fabulous system of infidelity, they have been constrained to deny a providence, and the usefulness of prayer; by virtue of which artifice, they fancy to have gained an acquisition of liberty to relax some bonds of moral obligation. Nay, had these two articles been admitted into their system, rank absurdity would have stared them in the face; and would, with great force, have retorted upon their denial of a divine revelation, because of the manifest consistency there is between them. For we thus argue; if there be constant exertions of an active efficacious providence, a constant acknowledgment of the divine

care and goodness must be reasonable. And if there has been very signal and remarkable interposals of almighty power, in support of the honours of God's moral government, whether in succouring and comforting, or in retraining and rebuking mankind, in past ages, it is but reasonable to conclude, some authentic history of the plan should furnish information concerning the doctrinal instruction of those divine interposals; and especially if some great and interesting events, to nations and people, have been foretold by men whom God raised up to exhort, rebuke, and forewarn; there can be no manner of doubt, but some authentic record would be made for the divine end of shewing man his dependence; exciting in him admiration, gratitude and praise, and encouraging an hope and confidence in the tender care, and unwearied goodness of his supreme almighty Lord.

Allow me farther to inform you, that every mind that thinks, will be apprehensive of a first concern with God; because he is creator, preserver, governor, and judge of all. He hence will infer, an express revelation must have been, of what is his will and law concerning the behaviour of mankind towards him, towards one another, and towards themselves.

Some record must have been made, and somewhere preserved, for public use and benefit, throughout the finishing ages of the world—to which written record it should seem allusion is had, when it is said, *he has magnified his word above all his name!*

Highly reasonable it is to conclude, that the adorable displays of Deity, in past ages, affording most important, divine instruction, must have had
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some certain conveyance from one generation to another.

But if we admit that of all God's messengers, the man Christ Jesus was the last, even he who should reveal, with fullest evidence, his truth and grace, as a determinate, decisive canon of the final judgment; it will follow, that a public record of those teachings would be necessary for the guidance of mankind, as the great, invariable standard of God's moral rule and government. And this appears yet more conclusive, since those teachings do affirm, that that last revealer of truth and grace, is ordained the visible judge of all.

Notwithstanding such plenary evidence, there is little probability of the unbeliever's attending to the believer's argument; consequently there remains no other encouragement for such a publication as this, but that only, of preventing the spread of a pestilential infection on the young, the yet innocent and undepraved mind. This you will then see to be a well-designed attempt, every way disinterested, humane, and friendly; because of the unwearied endeavours of the Infidel, to inculcate on unguarded, unfurnished minds, a contempt of the sacred scriptures,

We readily own to you, there are too many occasions given the unbeliever to blaspheme, or to cast reproach on the Christian profession, from the very absurd and ridiculous tenets of the far greater number of professors—opinions, which insult the reason of man, and highly dishonour the divine majesty of the New Testament canon—to expose which, is one design of the following discourses.

Nevertheless, in these imaginary, these cobweb subterfuges, the Infidel shelters; persuading himself, that he cannot be less secure of the divine favour, than those of so very deformed a complexion—he is thus led to pour contempt upon all religion, and no wonder; for if that can be said to be *a religion from God*, which countenanceth the rankest absurdity of idea, and the immorality both of principle and practice in its professors; it can never deserve the veneration of men, who form an estimate of its nature and tendency from so stupid and vicious a profession.

The gross ignorance, idolatry, superstition and vice, apparent among nominal Christians, do infinite mischief, both in spreading and confirming infidelity. And yet we may not by any means allow, that these foul spots and blemishes in the Christian profession, are sufficient apologies for that neglect and contempt which is thrown upon the Gospel by the unbeliever—for he certainly would not allow it to be a just and fair conclusion, that because there are many inhuman, many savage minds, worse than brutalized, found in the Pagan world, that therefore the principles of natural religion are of a deformed, disgusting spirit and complexion! or that because great numbers of Jews have forfeited all claim to human confidence, that therefore the Mosaic system of laws is depraving.—And yet, no better is the conclusion drawn by the Infidel against Christianity.

Consider again, that that written Code of instruction, which lays the claim to a divine origination, ought to be judged of as it lies in the sacred volume itself, and not as misrepresented by the temper, spirit, and behaviour of many who profess to receive it as their canon. The reason of which

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is so very plain and undeniable, that no one of the least understanding can avoid feeling the weight of the argument. But notwithstanding this is the truth of the case, or a fair exposure of the enchanted ground of infidelity, many there are who have clear heads and a good understanding in civil and political affairs, who yet, in the article of religion, do appear egregiously absurd, irrational, and stupid *. It therefore would have been very difficult to account for this contempt thrown upon a revelation well supported by *prophecy* and *miracle*, had not a solution been abundantly given, both by our Lord and his apostle St. Paul. The former affirms, "that every one who doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to it lest his deeds should be reprov'd †;" and that it is a defect in men's *desire* of doing the will of God. His words are these, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God ‡."—The other declares, it is because of their worldliness.—His words are,—“But if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them §.”

All young persons should be very studious to explore the delusive ground of infidelity, and make themselves well acquainted with the infinite importance of the sacred writings; for these writings do, above all others, regulate the heart and life: they make a man wise, and understanding in what the will of the Lord is. Their usefulness is found in an uniformly beneficial, efficacious influence on

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* The great LOCKE made this observation. † Joh. iii. 20.
 ‡ Joh. viii. 17. § 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

the temper and behaviour of man. A faith in them derives all its saving benefit from that consistency which it gives to all the faculties, powers, and passions of the soul. Herein *youth* will avoid those idle, absurd, and mischievous definitions of faith, invented by church-men and mystics; and they will approve the judgment which they themselves make of the revelation, when they have once brought that canon to the test of reason, truth, and God.

As an encouragement to the youth's paying a religious regard to the Gospel canon, he will find that, in fact, it gives him daily improving and confirming self-satisfaction, a firm and fixed confidence and hope in God, by reason of his spirit, i. e. his word dwelling in him*: a principle that is both dignifying and immortalizing. For "he who keepeth the commandments, [that is, the commandments as they are explained by Jesus] God dwelleth in him, and he in God†."

Such an attainment, we are assured, is not within the reach of infidelity. It cannot: because the man who denies that God did ever make any express revelation of his will, has no ability of judging what are some of his perfections; what the statute-laws of his kingdom; what the terms of man's acceptance; what the purposes of his grace and mercy; because totally ignorant, either of any divine command, or of any divine promise. Neither can he, with any certainty, determine about a future state, or world. He is destitute of every of those great ideas that enrich the mind, and which are derived wholly from an intimate acquaintance with a written revelation.—And yet,
 alas!

* Joh. vi. 63.

† 1 Joh. iii. 24.

alas! such is the conceit of the infidel, that he swells, and is quite bloated with his ignorance, pride, and vanity.

Did but young minds form a just conception of the unbeliever, they would see him to be an object of pity and commiseration; for truly that man's condition must be very deplorable, who, in the levity of his spirit, refuses to admit into his own breast, the most cheering, reviving, ravishing rays of divine truth, life, and love. This prayer would therefore be proper for us to put up, both for the infidel and ourselves—"From hardness of heart, "and contempt of thy word and commandment, "good Lord deliver us."

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE three following discourses were promised when I published *The open address of New-Testament evidence, or three plain monuments, &c.* Those had respect to the external, these to the internal evidence. In both I have endeavoured to state the divine testimony, with all the perspicuity which my understanding would permit, as it lies in the Gospel-canon; and with the freedom and faithfulness of a Christian, who owns no human authority on earth, in the province of religion.

✎ In my former publication, through forgetfulness, I omitted, in the discourse on the Sabbath, that argument for the change of the seventh to the first day of the week, taken, from the effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost on the first day, by Dr. *Lightfoot*, in his observations : see his works, vol. ii. p. 642, 643. Another presumptive argument might also have been adduced, from Mahomet's changing his sabbath from that both of the Jew, and of the Christian.

The supplemental discourse upon the *supernatural conception*, which follows the three internal evidences, has to do with a fact very much ridiculed by the unbeliever, and disputed, if not denied, by some who profess to be believers in the New Testament. If I have not mistaken the sense of the prophecy, that discourse must be allowed to have a place properly given it in this publication.

DISCOURSE I.

On the Unity of Gospel-Principles.

IN an age when vice and infidelity are in the height of profession, even in a christian protestant country, a careful survey of the internal evidence of the truth and divinity of the Gospel system cannot be unseasonable. An attempt shall therefore be made, in three discourses, on the unity of principles, on the original divine purity, and on the universality of the Gospel-canon. If then it shall be made manifest, that the New Testament asserts an unity of all divine principles throughout its teachings; that there is no admixture of human invention in all its system; and that the truth and grace of that new Covenant has an impartial, universal address, there will be found in it all the distinguishing, conclusive characteristics of a revelation from God.

Now it is well known, that the most shocking superstition, and the vilest imposture, have been generated by a departure from genuine Gospel teachings. For it is certain, that Mahomet availed himself of that greater degree of respect which was paid to his *Koran*, on account of his maintaining the unity of God, in opposition to the trinitarian heresy, which also gave popery its foundation; and has continued to be the great scandal of the christian profession, even yet more extensively.—This premised,

In the first discourse we shall investigate the unity of Gospel principles, as they are laid down by an apostle. See Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. “ There is
“ one

12 *On the Unity of Gospel-Principles.*

“ one body and one spirit, even as ye are called
“ in one hope of your calling ;—one Lord, one
“ faith, one baptism,—one God and father of all,
“ who is above all, and through all, and in you
“ all.”

St. Paul, now a prisoner at Rome, in the year of Christ 61, writes to the church at Ephesus, exhorting the Christians to walk worthy the vocation wherewith they were called, by preserving a graceful consistency in all their behaviour, even an habitual exertion of every personal and social virtue; and the more powerfully to assist them in this divine labour, he placeth before them, in one concise view, all the fundamentals of Gospel-teachings; therein he shews the unity, the harmony, or compactness of this most amiable constitution of God's moral Government, under the administration of the man Christ Jesus.—In treating the subject,

I. I shall take a distinct survey of the system.

II. Ascertain the weight of evidence.

III. Shew what amazing perversions of the unity of the Gospel plan have obtained among professing Christians.

The first article runs thus, *there is one body*. A phrase which figuratively represents the Christian church; and therefore comprehends all those who spiritually and morally stand related to their head, as truly as members of a natural body do to theirs; viz. all who have, or ever shall have received and lived upon his teachings, are thus united to Jesus in every age of the church, and do constitute and complete that one body. The metaphorical term, *body*, thus understood, will be supported by various passages

passages in the writings of this Apostle. Such as follow, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 14. "For as the body
"is one, and has many members, and all the
"members of that one body being many, are one
"body; so also Christ, i. e. the body of Christ,
"for by one spirit we are all baptized into one
"body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond
"or free—for the body is not one member but
"many."—*Again*, Ch. x. 17. "For we being ma-
"ny are one bread and one body."—Compare
Col. iii. 15. "Let the peace of God rule in your
"hearts, to which ye are also called in one body."

The *oneness* of this spiritual body does appear likewise from every member's deriving all its nourishment and vitality from one and the same head. So Col. ii. 19. "From the head all the body, by
"joints and bands having nourishment ministered
"and knit together, increaseth with the increase
"of God."—And hence it is, that in favour to the church, which is Christ's body, God has given him to be head over all things! Which church is thus denominated, "the fulness of him who filleth
"all in all." Eph. i. 22, 23. i. e. The church, considered in this union, partakes of all the fulness, both of the truth, and of the grace of God.

Again, this spiritual body, like the natural one, does consist of innumerable members, which have their distinct offices and departments, each possessing an equal claim to divine guidance and refreshing influence; and therefore cannot admit of superiority and subordinacy among themselves, or of an independence one on another: for even here we metaphorically affirm, "the eye cannot say to the
"hand, I have no need of thee: neither can the
"foot use this language. And as to the ear, it
"cannot say it is not of the body, because it is
"not

14 *On the Unity of Gospel-Principles.*

“not the eye. For God hath set the members,
 “every one in the body, as it hath pleased him,—
 “and he has so disposed them, that there should be
 “no schism or division in the body; but the mem-
 “bers should have the same care one for another.
 “And whether one member suffer, all the mem-
 “bers suffer with it; or one member be honoured,
 “all the members rejoice with that member.”
 Such are the divine sympathies, which are habi-
 tually found in the Christian church, among all its
 genuine members.

If by *the one body*, we thus understand the Chri-
 stian church, I would humbly ask, whether it is
 not distinguished from all civil church establish-
 ments, or ecclesiastical hierarchies, that ever did,
 does, or ever shall exist?—Is not the idea of such
 civil establishments incompatible with the nature
 and constitution of his spiritual body, which has
 in it no inequalities, i. e. no superiorities and sub-
 ordinacies?—None should take offence at these
 questions, when the New Testament representation
 of the church of Christ seems so expressly to forbid
 any prelatical or hierarchical powers*. The lust of
 pre-eminence was that depraved spirit in the apostles,
 which their Lord condemned†.—The common
 rights of Christians are undoubtedly of a like
 worth and importance, to each and to every indi-
 vidual; their claims are all equal, as well as with
 apostles; no legislative, no executive authority, of
 a spiritual nature, can be lodged in any member or
 members of this body; but every one is alike
 amenable to its head and Lord.

Besides

* Matth. xx. 25, 26, 27. xxiii. 4, 8. Mar. ix. 35, 36.
 Luk. ix. 46, 47. Joh. v. 44. Ch. xviii. 36.

† Math. xviii. 4. xxiii. 11. Mar. ix. 34, 35. Luk. ix. 46.
 xxii. 24.

Besides there being but one body, there is also but ONE SPIRIT.—Now this is no other than what guides, directs, animates, and invigorates that whole body, *viz.* the spirit of truth and love. There is therefore a similitude in the governing temper and taste of all true Christians. “The same mind is in them which was in Christ Jesus.” Phil. ii. 5. “God has not given us the spirit of a slavish fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” 2 Tim. i. 7. “He who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.” 1 Cor. vi. 17. “By which same spirit, all true Christians have alike freedom of access to God, as a father.” Eph. ii. 18.

The spirit of benevolence which the same Gospel-teachings do inspire, is what guides, governs, and directs, the whole aim of the Christian. Hence, “if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels of mercies, they are like-minded, having the same love, of one accord, of one mind.” And we cannot suppose it should be otherwise, when we consider that all Christians have the same divine rule, both in doctrine, precept, and example, upon which they attune and form their own spirits; so that “by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, and have been made to drink into one spirit.” 1 Cor. xii. 13.

This will be yet more conspicuous, as we investigate the *ratio*, or ground of the oneness of body and spirit, *viz.* this, “*Even as we are called IN ONE HOPE OF OUR CALLING.*”

Here we may observe, that all foreign, irreconcilable principles and motives are wholly excluded this heavenly divine system. The Gospel calling,

16 *On the Unity of Gospel-Principles.*

calling, is an high, holy, and heavenly one, as it invites men to virtue and to glory. Thus it is that St. Paul has observed to the Thessalonians, "God
 " has, from the beginning, chosen men to salva-
 " tion, through sanctification of the spirit, even a be-
 " lief of the truth."—To which he adds—"where-
 " unto he calleth you by the Gospel, to the ob-
 " taining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ."
 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.—In like manner says St. Peter, "the God of all grace, who hath called us
 " unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that
 " ye have suffered a while, make you perfect,
 " stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Ep. v. 10.—
 In a word, its being an holy calling, is what makes
 it an heavenly one. See Heb. viii. 1. compared
 with 2 Tim. i. 9.

Now as but one and the same object of hope is
 proposed to the Christian, so there can be but one
 reasonable ground of exercising that hope, which
 must be the purifying effect which it has upon us.—
 We are taught by St. *John* thus to reason, when
 he says, "he who hath this hope in him, purifieth
 " himself, even as he is pure." 1 Ep. iii. 3. And
 St. *Paul* affirms, that the salutary grace of God
 which has appeared to all men, teacheth all to live
 soberly, righteously, and godly, who would look
 for the blessed hope. Thus it is that the ground
 of hope is such as will never fail, or disappoint the
 Christian. Heb. vi. 8. Nay, St. *Paul* describes the
 Deity as the God of hope! Rom. xv. 13. From
 all which it appears, that there is but one hope, or
 one ground of hope in the Christian's calling; and
 that is, a being wholly sanctified by the *truth* of
 God. For an Apostle "gives thanks to the fa-
 " ther, who hath made us meet to be partakers
 " of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. i.
 18. Indeed this is the great end for which the
 Gospel

Gospel revelation was given, viz. to "open blind eyes, to turn men from darkness to light; from the power of satan unto God, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified." Thus Christians are called in one hope of their calling; inasmuch as holiness is shewn to be their meetness or qualification for happiness.

So much may suffice for giving distinct and clear ideas of the one body, and one spirit, from the one great exciting and enlivening motive, which is, *the hope of our calling.*

We are to proceed to contemplate the governing head of this body, thus animated; to wit, the ONE LORD:

This, most evidently, is peculiar to the Christian dispensation, and opposed to the Pagan theogony; for St. Paul observes, "they had had Lords many." 1 Cor. viii. 5. The heathen world had many mediators between them and their supreme deities. These the Greeks were wont to call Demons. And the Jews had learnt to ascribe to demons, all extraordinary distempers and uncommon evils, which is very apparent from the Gospel history. At the same time, I should humbly be of opinion, that the apostle may have also opposed *the one Lord*, under the Gospel, to the ministration of Angels under the Jewish dispensation. For he speaks of the word, or law delivered by Angels, Heb. ii. 2. Also of the law being ordained by Angels, in the hand of Moses the mediator, Gal. iii. 19. St. Stephen likewise says, his nation received the law, by the disposition of Angels, Acts vii. 53.

The learned Mr. *James Pierce* thus writes,
 “ The Angels, before our Saviour’s time, seem
 “ plainly to have had provinces and domi-
 “ nions allotted them, one presiding over one
 “ country, and another presiding over another
 “ country.” See his note on Col. ii. 15. And,
 in truth, we have hints given us, in the New Testa-
 ment, of an undue worship having been paid to
 angels; Col. ii. 18. Nay, according to *Josephus*,
 “ the Essenes, a sect among the Jews, made great
 “ account of the names of angels, and should
 “ seem to have addressed them as mediators.” It
 is also observed, from some passages in *Philo’s*
 writings, that he thought “ angels were messengers
 “ who presented men’s prayers to God. And like-
 “ wise, from *Tobit*, ch. xi. 14.—xii. 5. even this
 “ should appear to have been a notion which had
 “ prevailed among the Jews*.”

It should therefore be reasonable to conclude,
 that the *one Lord*, under the Gospel dispensation, is
 opposed both to the many Lords among the ido-
 latrous Pagans, and to the superstitious and undue
 homage paid to angels by the Jews; and especially
 to their having received the law by the ministration
 of angels. Accordingly we hence see, with what
 great propriety the apostle reports to the Hebrew
 Christians, that when God had brought his first-
 begotten from the dead, and had advanced him to
 the right hand of power, he said, *let all the angels*
of God worship him. This was enough to indispose
 the mind of a converted Jew, from ever once more
 directing his homage to angels.

There is a fine passage to my purpose, in 1 Cor.
 xii. 3. where St. Paul, having told the Corinthians
 that

* See Goadby’s Illustration of the New Testament, &c. on
 ii. 18.

that they knew they themselves were Gentiles, who had been carried away to the worship of dumb idols—he adds, “wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed, or anathema.” i. e. none of them who were divinely informed, would rank Jesus with demons, or dead men, those dumb idols whom they had been wont to worship.—And farther he says, “that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the spirit.” i. e. either by the spirit of prophecy or of miracle, or by that spirit of holiness which has separated the idea of the Lordship of Jesus, from that of all other Lords.

There is yet another kind of usurpation of power, to which the authority of the one Lord, is opposed; and that is, a dominion exercised over the faith of men, by *spiritual wickednesses in high places*! Such a shocking claim of authority, in giving law to conscience, had actually obtained among the Jews! which tyranny our great prophet often censures, and openly condemns. “Their teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and so unlording the commandments of God;”—he remarks upon as capitally criminal, Matth. xv. 6, 9. He openly contradicts their teachings, see Math. v. 21. to the end of that sermon, and gives the true spirit and sense of every precept they had perverted. And in ch. xxiii. he very expressly forbids that his disciples should, in their religious character, acknowledge any human authority whatsoever; forasmuch as they have but *one* Lord and Master, and all they are brethren. He every where asserts the sacred rights of private judgment, and chargeth with enormous wickedness Scribes and Pharisees; denouncing a woe upon them for assuming a sovereignty over minds; the prerogative of none but God.—No other being can prescribe

to the faith and worship of man.—To inculcate this truth, was a capital design of his mission, Joh. viii. 36. In fact, both Jews and Gentiles were enslaved under the exercise of a priestly spiritual tyranny, till Jesus Christ came to preach deliverance to captives, and to set such prisoners free. “For all whom the Son makes free, they are free indeed.” And this, assuredly, is an essential part of that salvation which we have under the Gospel, *viz.* being redeemed from a slavish subjection to an assuming priesthood: in which the generality of mankind were involved at the time of the Gospel’s first address. And yet, alas! how very soon did Christians forget what are the unalienable, and most sacred and important rights of the human mind, by pretending a power to prescribe and impose articles and rules of faith and worship. And here-upon erecting an human mock-tribunal, sitting in judgment upon those who religiously differed from them, as to the sense they formed of the divine canon; and thus defeating one manifest design of Christ’s mission as a redeemer. Whatever pretence is therefore made, or by whomsoever, to give law to conscience, by requiring subscription to articles of faith, or conformity to modes of worship, it is notoriously ANTI-CHRISTIAN; because it imports an explicit and express denial of the truth of this fundamental Gospel-principle, *viz.* “that the Christian has but one Lord.”—Will the religion of Jesus ever appear in its native genuine light, so long as hierarchies, spiritual dictators, and law-givers are found within the Christian profession? Can civil-church-establishments be made to correspond with the plan of the Gospel Constitution? which consecrates and acknowledges but one Lord; and which divinely asserts the equality of Christians—*all ye are brethren.*

Do not let my reader think I am taking too much freedom, in being thus dissatisfied with civil-church-establishments; for if I do at all understand the teachings of Jesus, and of his apostles, these establishments have no countenance at all given them, but are most expressly condemned in those divine teachings. And if this be the case, they must, so long as they continue, be the reproach and scandal of the Christian profession. For, as one says, "what are these commonly called national churches, or human establishments of Christianity, fenced in with creeds and confessions, enclosed with canons and constitutions of various kinds, authoritatively enjoined to be subscribed and observed; and fortified with the powers and sanctions of this world?—What are they, but temporary institutions of human policy, as variable as the civil government of each country where they are?—Utterly repugnant to the nature and extent of Christ's kingdom *."

Such a symbolizing with Pagan governments, may perfectly suit a Popish system; but must be the inevitable ruin of Protestantism.—The young among us of this day, may possibly live to see its fatal effects taking place in Britain †.

Thus much for that fundamental, *viz.*—the *one Lord*.

The next in order, is, ONE FAITH.

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* Theological Repository, Dec. 1770, p. 456.

† See repeated advertisements of Sacred Music in the Pope's Chapel, price 10s. 6d. and the History of the famous Preacher, Friar Gerund de Campazas, 2 vol. price 10s. 6d. Are not these ugly signs of the Times?

22 *On the Unity of Gospel-Principles.*

We may understand this, either of one rule of faith, or of one principle of faith, exercised on that one rule. Now, the written Gospel is, without controversy, that one rule of faith to all Christians, in all places and ages.—Nay, Faith is a term often put for the Gospel. Rom. i. 5.—x. 8.—xvi. 26. Gal. i. 23. Phil. i. 27. 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2 Ep. iv. 7. Jude, verse 3. Rev. xiv. 12.—Christians are likewise to judge for themselves of this one rule of faith, and for none but themselves. The reason is very plain; because none can ever render either the doctrine or the precept PRINCIPLE, but the man himself. It must be the efforts of his own powers, religiously to observe the rule, and imitate the example. To this purpose it will be necessary, that the Christian understands the *rule* to be fully declarative of the divine will, as revealed by his Lord and Master; and that he carefully enters into the true spirit of the instruction; else he cannot be said to have the one common faith.—On the other hand, if he believes only as such or such men say they believe; or if he interprets scripture by some church-articles, he is not a believer in Christ, but in such men, or in such a church. Hence *his* faith is not of the complexion of this one faith; because it has all its existence in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God.

Again, the one faith must accord with the reason of man. So the learned *Spencer*,—"God, I am sure," says he, "has no where required us to a faith which cannot satisfy the reason of a man, which searcheth into the grounds and reasons thereof." See his discourse on prodigies, p. 252,

Another fundamental, is, ONE BAPTISM.

The

The Jews had divers washings or baptisms, and were very ceremonious and exact in applying the water of purification. So had the Pagan Greeks various washings and purifications; some before they sacrificed to their celestial, and others before they sacrificed to their infernal Gods.—The Christian has only one baptism, which acknowledges the exaltation, or sovereign authority of the one Lord, and initiates into his church and kingdom.—N. B. The Romans also had an early dedicatory rite*, as well as the Pagan Greeks†.

The last fundamental article in this harmonious system, is, “*one God the father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.*”

This is the utmost which language could express of that ineffable, incomprehensible spirit; the one unchangeable, infinite, and eternal source of all being and blessedness. He has been known and worshipped, as the one living and true God, under all former dispensations; even as possessed of all possible perfection! And yet, under the Gospel, the manifestation made of him, as the God and father of Jesus Christ, has rendered him yet more glorious! For, since he who can have no limitation of presence, power, and influence, is alike the father of every sincere Christian, they are his sons and daughters. And, moreover, he is not only *above* all, but he is *through* all, and *in* us all.

This is very aptly opposed to the polytheism of the Gentile idolatrous world, who had *Gods many*. For St. Paul says, “to us Christians there is but “one God the father, of whom are all things, and
B 4 “we

* See *Hooke's Rom. Hist.* Vol. III. p. 272. Where he mentions the dedication of Cicero, on the 5th day of his birth.

† See *Potter's Greek Antiquities*, Vol. II. p. 328, &c.

24 *On the Unity of Gospel-Principles,*

"we in him." 1 Cor. viii. 6.—He there adds, "one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."—I the rather mention this, because of the obvious distinction here made between the one God and the one Lord; the one, the unoriginated source; the other, the minister by whom he preserves, succours, and governs his church.—So much for the unity of Gospel-Principles.

Secondly.—Thus we have gained a most comprehensive view of the unity and harmony of the Gospel-System, in all its fundamentals; and cannot fail discovering its divine original. No one can be at a loss how to calculate *the weight of evidence.*

For who does not see the wisdom and prudence in which God has abounded towards mankind, in the uniting idea of all the subjects of his Kingdom as one body; consisting of various members, which have but one head? The benevolent spirit, or principle of brotherly affection, must, and does operate in all genuine Christians. And with the utmost reason, because this is their discriminating characteristic mark, *viz.* their loving one another. Joh. xiii. 35. But as benevolence is the end of the Gospel institution, 1 Tim. i. 5. and as benevolence is the highest resemblance man can possibly have of his maker, Math. v. 48. hence, the evidence of this system being of God, rises to demonstration.

Again,—The *grace* of the Gospel constitution, or the Christian's being raised to the hope of eternal life, has its basis on the benevolence of his spirit, and his being formed by love. Order, harmony, agreement of spirit and principle, qualify for the blissful enjoyment of essential love! 1 Joh. iv. 8. and must render the association of kindred minds, *i. e.* minds of the same moral and divine complexion,

plexion, for ever felicitating.—Yet, inasmuch as the object of hope, ETERNAL LIFE, required, from the astonishing greatness and glory of its idea, some very convincing illustration; therefore it was, that the ministrations and endurances of Jesus Christ were appointed.—And because he has thrown so much light upon it, we are said to have the divine bestowment made by him, i. e. instrumentally.

Again, Since mankind, in every age of the world, have either had some divine medium of worship, or some fanciful mediators, it demonstrates the wisdom and goodness of God, in consecrating and appointing one mediator, with full powers to shew us the father; and virtually become, to all his disciples, the way, the truth, and the life! or, in other words, the light of the world! and the life of men! He is emphatically the one Lord, as he is the only Law-giver in the Christian church.

For this reason, Christians have but *one rule of faith*, and that is, the teachings of Jesus and his Apostles, in the New Testament writings; which every one is to interpret for himself, and apply to himself. A rule that is not only intelligible, but plain, to all who are willing to do the will of God. *Job. vii. 17.* This demonstrates the divinity of the Gospel institution.

And we are also to observe, there is but one ritual which initiates into this heavenly Kingdom, and that is, *baptism*, or the application of water; in acknowledgment of the sovereign authority of the one Lord.

But a most conclusive evidence, that this institution must be of divine original, is, “its asserting
“and maintaining, the unrivalled, the peerless
“majesty of the supreme Being; the one God,
“the

26 *On the Unity of Gospel-Principles.*

“the father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.”—A doctrine, on which all true religion only can have its support. And which is found to be constantly taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles, at a time when polytheism and idolatry covered and darkened all the great Empires in the habitable world! and whose capital laws had been most shockingly corrupted, or perverted, by that very people whom he had separated from the nations. For though the Jews are not chargeable with a national acknowledgment of more Gods than one, at the time when the Messiah was personally addressing them; yet they were over-run with immorality, vice, and a gross superstition. In this dark and depraved condition of the world, the Gospel revelation was, manifestly, the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

Thus we have ascertained the weight of evidence, as it is found to derive from the *unity* of Gospel-principles.

We shall proceed to shew, some of the many gross *perversions* made of this heavenly institution. And,

I. From the above idea of the one body, we shall be able to detect vulgar errors concerning the *church of Christ*. For his church is not confined to any human enclosure, or national establishment; not to any one distinguished denomination, or mode of profession. It has no mortal, i. e. no fallible head. But all men throughout the habitable earth, who acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the one Lord and Law-giver, and are cordially united to him on the principles of Gospel-truth, and in the spirit of divine love, they are members of his mystical body: and none but such who thus have their conversations

tions in heaven, do properly make a part of his church. These, all of them, have one spirit, as they are called in one hope of their calling; they have one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all. Every other idea of the church of Christ, is confused, false, and erroneous; narrow, contracted, and unworthy of the Kingdom of heaven.

But from the view above taken, we are furnished with a most delightful prospect of the wide extent of the Christian church, and its spiritual, divine complexion. Nay, we infer from hence, a present fellowship, and inter-communion of minds, which shall have an everlasting happy association in the future world! And this, because of their having been alike formed and attuned upon the very same divine principles: and who, from the infinitude of moral excellencies, are called, *the fulness of him who filleth all in all.*

II. From the unity and simplicity of the Gospel system, we are led to deplore the absurdity and impiety of Christian professors, who have been employing themselves to no better purpose, than to perplex and confound all fundamental principles of the Gospel-instruction, to the great depravity of one another. I will make a citation from Dr. *Dan. Whitby*, a dignified divine of the English-church-establishment—who says, when treating on the unity of the spirit, “Hence it demonstratively
“ follows, that no Church-Governors, jointly or
“ severally, can be appointed by God, to be the
“ living judges, or the infallible directors of our
“ faith. For since, in matters of faith, we must
“ have a judgment of certainty, we cannot own
“ them as such, till we are certain that they belong
“ to that church, of which Christ is the head, and to
“ which alone the promise of the spirit does be-
“ long:

28 *On the Unity of Gospel-Principles.*

“ long; i. e. till we are certain they are sincere
“ and upright Christians. Since, therefore, God
“ has given us no certain rule to know this by,
“ we may rest satisfied, that he designed no such
“ magisterial guides should be found in his
“ church *.”

This is saying enough, to cut off all claims to dominion over conscience. But I can go further, being assured that God has not appointed any Subgovernor in his church; nor has given authority to any to take upon them the direction of other men's faith. If I am right, the very pretension to such authority, must consequently be a full proof that they do not belong to that church of which Christ is the head; but are forcerers, cheats, or impostors. This surely is plain, forasmuch as all Christians have one and the same rule, *for trying the spirits, whether they are of God.*—It is therefore impossible, that any one or more should be invested with the power of giving law to conscience, in the province of religion. Consequently, to make creeds, and impose them, is an open invasion of the unalienable rights of Christians: for all the real or genuine members of Christ's body, have an equal relation to him, and do derive from him all needful light, aid and succour, under the trial.

III. This description of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, encourages every honest, serious mind, to read and study the New Testament writings for themselves, as a divine canon of temper, disposition, and life. None should ever imagine it can have what is dark or doubtful, either in its doctrine, precept, or example. And as to the manner or method in which this divine book should

* His Paraphrase and Commentary, in loco.

should be consulted, we may avail ourselves of some advantage, from a rule laid down by the celebrated author of *THE SPIRIT OF LAWS*,—which is,—“The laws should be explained by the laws; and history by history.” So, by a parity of reasoning, the New Testament canon should be considered as its own best Expositor. No commentator can throw so much light upon the sacred text, as it does upon itself, when carefully examined and compared. And every Commentator who has deserved notice, has taken this method to illustrate its divine instruction.

There is not a better key to the whole New Testament teachings, than my text provides. We must so interpret all its doctrines, as to render them consistent with this unity. But instead of so reading the New Testament, men carry along with them some education-prejudices, or some systematic-prepossessions; and they read the sacred page only to countenance and confirm, not at all to correct and remove those prejudices.

Perhaps there is not any thing more depraving of theological ideas, among professors, than the very mischievous distinction of *orthodoxy* and *beterodoxy*, which has been inculcated upon weak and vulgar minds; the standard of which is no other, than some adopted systems of opinion, that are wholly of human original. Whereas, we may be certain, no man is sound in the faith, who is unsound in his morals,—and that no man is unsound in the faith, who has a soundness in his morals. Orthodoxy and heterodoxy, do lye in the sanctifying effect which the Gospel has on the temper and life of the professor;—and in the want of such influence.—I confess I know of no other criterion, either of the soundness or unsoundness of a Christian's faith. —

Every

Every honest person will therefore be encouraged to read and study his New Testament, from an assurance that he cannot run into any fatal error or mistake, so long as he reads and applies it, as a rule of life and manners, and preserves the unity and harmony of all its first principles.

IV. From this scale given of the unity and harmony of the Gospel system, we can easily account for the superstition and bigotry, copiously found among professing Christians. They, not content with its plainness and simplicity, have presumed to introduce pompous rites, and ridiculous ceremonies, into its worship, as ornaments and decorations of the mode and figure of the address. Though, as we have observed, the Gospel has delivered mankind from the burthen some ritual of Moses, and from the savage rites of the idolatrous Gentile nations. The world was in the most abject slavery, when the Gospel set the prisoner free. An advantage has nevertheless been taken of the powerful influence which sensitive objects are found to have upon the human mind; and hence the whole pomp and parade of ceremony. The eye, allured by paintings and statuary, the ear with vocal and instrumental music: the passions are thus arrested, the sentiments materialized and depraved; and thus a disability brought on the mind of ever entering into the spirit of truth in men's devotions. What a strange idea must mankind have of the Deity, who can suppose that magnificence of building, fine music, and masterly paintings, do give an acceptableness to the homage offered to a pure spirit, who has said, he will be worshipped *in spirit and in truth?* *for such the father seeketh to worship him.* Joh. iv. 23. A popish writer can say, "let us not offer up our treasures to God, unless we are proud of shewing that we esteem what he would have

"have us despise." *Spirit of Laws*, Vol. II. p. 178.

V. If the Christian has "but one God and father of all, who is above all, through all, and in us all;" then what must be said or thought of great numbers of professors, who seem to have manifestly perverted this primary fundamental of the Gospel system? And when, upon this very basis, all true religion ever has, and ever must have, its support? Assuredly, the supreme homage paid to Jesus Christ, by those who contend for his being God equal with the father, does by no means consist with this capital idea, of *the one God the father of all!*—Will any presume to call in question the truth of this first principle? Will any of the Athanasians say, that the Son is the one God, the father of all, who is above all, through all, and in us all? If they are not able to say this, their affirmations about, and ascriptions unto Jesus Christ, or to the Son, as God equal with the father, are unjustifiable: and they are guilty of notoriously perverting the very first significant fundamental principle of all true religion.

It is absolutely impossible that the one Lord should be this one God, inasmuch as the one God the father is here said to be ABOVE *all*; and therefore must be above him whom he has constituted the one Lord. Nor is it any where in the New Testament once intimated, that this Lord is possessed of any one essential perfection of deity; or that any one of those perfections can be communicated to any being whatsoever. I mean, Eternity, omniscience, omnipresence, immensity, and *infinity*, no more than supremacy, are communicable attributes. None but the one God the father, can be *above, through, and in all*.—These perfections are ascribable

ascribable to none else.—Deity can have no equal; either in presence, power, or glory.—He is God; and there is no God besides him.

But because of these his adorable, incommunicable perfections, a reality, a spirit, and an energy are thereby given to the Gospel-system of principles, because of their unity and harmony. Indeed, the better any one is acquainted with the teachings of Jesus, the more he will be persuaded of the derivation and dependence of the Son, and of his subordinacy to the Father. It has been the constant labour of the divine address of the Son of God, to persuade men; that what he said, and what he did, was by virtue of that authority and power he received from the one God, his God and father*, for which there was great occasion; since he foresaw how apt mankind would be to misrepresent him, from the amplitude, sublimity, and peculiar lustre of his commission; and also from the most perfect revelation, or that wonderful manifestation he made of the father.

VI. The Sceptic and Infidel have their stupidity manifestly condemned by this very representation of the *unity* of Gospel principles; since it is impossible there should be a more conclusive evidence of the divinity of any system. There never was *unity* and integrity found in any humanly devised system of religion. Unity never yet appeared in any plan laid by the wisdom of man; for what originates therein, must necessarily have imperfection and discordancy. Even the blessed Jesus disclaims the idea of having spoken of himself. See Joh. vii. 16. xiv. 10, 24. xii. 49. Even the best laid scheme of civil policy, has ever betrayed

* Consult St. John's Gospel, *passim*.

trayed its imperfect original. But in the Gospel-Institution, there is a perfect coincidence of all its parts, and an undisturbed harmony from the *unity* and concord of all its principles.

The rejector of this divine system therefore stands condemned, because he has taken no due pains to discover the fulness or perfection of Gospel-evidence. He has fed his prejudices from the abusive representations made of it by professors. No fair judgment of that heavenly divine canon, has been made by him:—for whatever he may think of himself, the New Testament writings do most clearly display the truth and grace of God, though he may fancy to despise or neglect that revelation.—It is a fair consequence, that that man runs no small risque, who rejects this counsel of God against himself:—*i. e.* who despiseth the riches of such goodness, which has nothing less than eternal life in its address!—how would one grieve over his stupidity!

See we to it, that none of us receive the grace of God in vain, but that we hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of truth, peace and love, and so grace shall be multiplied upon us.—But otherwise, that interrogation of an Apostle will have its awful, tremendous aspect upon us,—“how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation! which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterwards confirmed by them that heard: God also bearing them witness, both with signs, wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.”

C

DISCOURSE II.

On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, considered the *unity* of Gospel-Principles; it will be both natural and easy in this, to make it very evident that the wisdom of man, his cunning and contrivance, had no hand at all in framing any part of that system: which done, we shall discover it to be of a purely divine original, and perfectly complete in its instruction.—Let St. Paul again guide us in this investigation; see 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. “And my speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man’s wisdom; but in demonstration of the spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men; but in the power of God.”

Notwithstanding this, just as it was in the apostolic age, so it continues to be to this day; mankind are ever extremely fond of the rhetorical, musical, passionate address. The flowers of oratory are sensitively grateful; and the well turned periods are mechanically striking.—Image and figure have more engaged the attention, than logical reasoning and good sense are wont to do. Our crowded *operas* and *oratorios*, are, at this day, in full proof of the truth of this observation. The melody of sounds, which delight the ear, do ravish, and feed the passion. And however serious or solemn the subject, even that wherein the most important business of man is everlastingly concerned, in the religious address, yet absurdity and mystery, rather than the

the real dignity and majesty of truth, fire the admiration, and furnish the fervors of devotion. No matter how little light is thrown into the intellect; for if the passions be but vigorously excited and the imagination busily employed, the speaker soon becomes popular. Hence it was that St. Paul found the Greek eloquence so much admired in his day; and that it was with them, *the excellency of speech, and the enticing words of man's wisdom.*

So a learned writer of the last age, has exposed
“ the ignorant imaginations of those men, which
“ (like the heathens of old) look upon heat and
“ noise, words full of charms thrown out without
“ method or measure upon the sudden, and very
“ vehement affections, the symptoms of a person
“ *full of God*, and managed by some power tran-
“ scendent to natural. Whereas all these things,
“ howsoever, like meteors, they carry an heavenly
“ appearance in the eye of ignorance, we have
“ found of a more common and base extraction.
“ Nor is the mighty power they may have over
“ the spirits of others, any argument to the
“ contrary; all fluent language, feathered with
“ soft and delicate phrases, and pointed with
“ pathetical accents, being naturally fitted (as the
“ *STAGE* will assure us) to make deep impression
“ upon the heart. *Plutarch* speaking of the rare
“ art which those masters of language, the Grae-
“ cian Sophists discovered in composing and deli-
“ vering of their orations, tells us, that *they*
“ *raised up a kind of Bacchical Enthusiasm, and*
“ *transported their hearers with some honey words,*
“ *soft and effeminate phrases and accents, and a kind*
“ *of singing tones.* And no doubt those hearers of
“ whom he there speaks, which used to applaud
“ their orators at the end of their declamations

36 On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.

“ with a θεῶς, θεοφορητῶς, δαιμονῶς, ἀπροσitus,
 “ *divinely, heavenly, inimitably* spoken; found
 “ themselves as much stirred and moved as many
 “ a man at a sermon, who yet thinks it is not the
 “ art of the preacher, but the Spirit of God that
 “ warms and excites him.*”—“ Whereas, this
 “ same writer says, all these *phænomena* may be
 “ solved by mere mechanical principles, all gene-
 “ rally being but the issue of a natural pregnancy
 “ and fervor of temper, exerting itself in fluent
 “ words tinged with religion and scripture
 “ phrases.†”

It is a proof of extreme depravity in a people, when nothing will engage their attention to divine things, but the Theatrical address of the public teacher; when men will not endure sound doctrine, but after their lusts heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears. 2 Tim. iv. 3.

This rhetorical mechanical address, St. Paul heartily despised, and would by no means admit it could have any propriety, in declaring the wisdom of God to mankind; even that wisdom which had been till then a mystery, the hidden wisdom which had respect to idolatrous, vicious Gentiles being called, by the Gospel, unto virtue and unto glory!—The more fully to convince the Corinthians of the sovereign contempt he had of this their worldly wisdom, he was determined to know nothing among them, as an Apostle, public-teacher, or orator, but only the doctrine of a crucified Jesus—and accordingly, he was with them, in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, *i.e.*
 as

* Spencer on Vulg. Prophecies, pages 77, 78.

† Ibid. p. 72.

as I understand him, the subject of his preaching had an aptitude in it to put his auditors into such a deeply humiliating state of mind ; for as much as it opened to them their deplorable ignorance, idolatry, and vice ! It set before them their very weak, deformed, guilty characters ; and exposed tremendously their perilous condition : and possibly might have some reference to the very great concern he himself had about the souls of men, and their salvation.

We find, to our purpose, that God, by his prophet Ezekiel, in ancient times, complained much of a like depraved taste in the Jewish people, —“ they come to thee, says the oracle, according
“ to custom, and as my people they sit before
“ thee, and they hear thy words : but they will
“ not do them : for with their mouth they shew
“ much love, but their heart goes after their
“ covetousness. For lo, thou art unto them as a
“ very lovely song of one that has a pleasant
“ voice, and can play well on an instrument, for
“ they hear thy words, but they do them not.”—
It should seem by this, that Ezekiel had the natural powers of a fine orator, his voice melodious, and his address extremely engaging ; he was a very popular preacher. Not so St. Paul ; he had not these natural talents ; and he was far from borrowing any of the artful strokes of oratory. He delivered no truths, but just as he had them by divine inspiration. A plainness of speech run through his address, wholly unornamented by the flourishes of elocution ; hence it was in demonstration of the spirit and of power. His aim he wholly levelled at the moral state of the mind ; and his address had immediately to do with first-principles of truth and life. —

38 *On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.*

This shall serve as a short commentary, on the former part of my text. And I will now proceed to consider more distinctly the divine end of St. Paul's apostolic labors, *viz.* says he,

“ That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Here, we must *first* attempt the doctrinal instruction, and then make some useful observations. —

A more general view of the doctrinal instruction, might be given in the words of an English high-church prelate—“ the Gospel of Christ, *says* *be*, at its earliest appearance had all the probabilities in the world AGAINST its success: for it was possessed scarce of any one of those advantages which do most signally recommend a new doctrine, and make it thrive. It had no complying tenets, to sooth mens appetites and passions; but was all harsh and austere.—It had no encouragement from the civil power; it had no force nor cunning to uphold it; no men of esteem and eminence to engage on its side.—The age of discovery, was more discerning and enlightened, more curious and inquisitive than any that either preceded or followed that age: and therefore the success of this doctrine could not be owing to mens ignorance, or to their supineness. Finally, the publishers delivered it not out by parcels, as is the way of cunning and designing men; but they offered the whole of it to be examined and compared.*”—

This

* Dr. Atterbury Bp. of Rochester's 14 Sermons, p. 96, 97, 98.

On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon. 39

This gives pretty justly, I apprehend, a *general* view of the doctrinal instruction; and yet, a more distinct investigation may be very proper. It will, I apprehend, convey to our minds the following truths.

First, the apostolical canon is not, cannot be of human original ; because it comprehends and enforces each and every of the first principles of natural religion, separate from all the corruptions of polytheism, idolatry, superstition and vice ; by which, the religion of nature had been sadly perverted among pagans. And it also delivers the religion of the Christian from the local, ceremonial, separating Mosaic ritual ; and from the traditions of the elders, which had disguised the moral.—All of which might be expected ; since these apostolic teachings do contain the most compleat and perfect view that was ever given of immutable, eternal truth ; its obligation and motive are drawn from the known character of God, and from the most adorable ideas of his providence and government. In the whole of which teachings, there is nothing inconsistent, nothing dark or mysterious, nothing little, mean, or trifling. Upon the whole, the Gospel-Institution has all the evidence that can now be given of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Nor is there one single conceivable idea of the divine majesty that is adorable, which is not to be found in that written-canon.

Another truth which my text would suggest, is, there are no marks of the artful, fanciful, and conjectural ; no tokens of man's inventive faculty in any New Testament doctrines, maxims, motives, or injunctions. *On the contrary*, its doctrines are all consistent, rational, moral, heavenly, and

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divine,

40 *On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.*

divine,—its rules and laws are all calculated to regulate and refine the tempers, tastes and spirits of men: to produce in them an habitual rectitude; to render them superior to the infectious, malignant influence of temptation. So all its maxims are wise, just, and benevolent: they inspire with an universal good will to mankind, and they admit of no partialities nor reserves in the Christian's morals.—Not a single motive is there in the whole, taken from this world, that would gratify either avarice, ambition, or sensuality. But every of the excitements to the desire, delight, or joy of man, are from objects which are spiritual, heavenly and divine:—Objects which have no imperfection, and can neither delude, deprave, nor disappoint the mind.—

Again, all Gospel-Injunctions are calculated to give more active life and renewed vigor to the practical scheme of labor and pursuit. Its Symbolical-Institutions are also very simple and expressive; and what manifestly do subserve the order, beauty, and benefit of the Christian profession. So it is with the Christian Sabbath, which is a constant memorial of the fact of Christ's resurrection;—just as baptism is of his exaltation;—and as the Lord's-Supper is of his sufferings and death. The first presents to our minds, the finished divine evidence given to his character and mission;—the second reports his authority as the one Lord and Law-giver, to whom we are to pay a constant subjection and obedience;—the third represents to us the malignity of worldliness; and shews the necessity there is of our being crucified to the world with all its affections and lusts. The first provides us with the season for social worship: the second gives us an admission into his church and kingdom; and the third is an

an act of fellowship with the whole body of Christians, wherein we renew our engagements to love our head, and all his members *.

Another truth suggested by this apostolic declaration, is, the full assurance it gives of the Gospel's being a purely divine canon, from its immediately addressing every individual as equally and intimately concerned in its teachings, both as a rule of life, and as the standard of the final judgment. If therefore any argument could have been produced in confutation of the divinity of this canon, it must have been notorious within the course of 1700 years. But in as much as it has stood the test of so many ages; and no other system of instruction could ever be shewn to come in competition with it, we may be perfectly well satisfied that the authenticity and authority of the New Testament is unquestionably and conclusively divine.

Nay, besides the Gospel-Address being equally interesting to every individual of mankind, to whom it is made; the nature and tendency of its instruction, is such as makes an open and direct appeal to the judgment and conscience of every man; and refers that claim which it has of a divine original, to the most satisfactory test of his own experience. — In fact, these sacred writings require no interpreter; but the man's own honest, unprejudiced attention and diligent application. And they give him proof that as he is willing and desirous to do the will of God, so he becomes capable of knowing the doctrine; and of distinguishing very clearly, that it is of God. — Now
this

* See the argument at large, in *the open address of New Testament evidence, or three plain monuments, &c.*

42 *On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.*

this is what no other institution could ever boast, the glory being reserved for that of the Gospel; concerning which *Jeremiab* thus prophesieth,—
“and they shall no more teach every man his
“neighbour and every man his brother, saying,
“know the Lord: for they shall all know me,
“from the least of them unto the greatest of
“them, saith the Lord.” Jer. xxxi. 34. Which
is so applied by an apostle in Heb. viii. 11.
Whereas, the unenlightened Gentiles were under
the absolute guidance of proud priests and very
artful and conceited philosophers. Nay, even the
Jews depended wholly on their priests to offer
sacrifices for them, and explain not only their
ritual, but their very code of laws delivered at
Sinai: and they depended likewise on their prophets
to inform them, what were the teachings of the
ORACLE that so frequently spake by them. While
the New Testament code, is as well understood
by the unlearned, as it can be by the most learned
of mankind.

Eternal thanks be to God, these scriptures are
yet found, by all who do cordially receive their
instructions, to be *the favour of life unto life*.
Men are transformed by them from being igno-
rant, immoral and vicious; into judicious, moral,
and virtuous characters. They are experimentally
known by thousands and ten thousands to be both
the wisdom of God, and the power of God.
This is truly the case with every sincere, every
genuine Christian.

A yet farther important truth, should seem to
be suggested by the apostolical declaration before
us, *viz.* that the original written records which
were at first delivered to the churches, have been
faithfully translated into other languages, and
transf.

transmitted down to us, unaltered in all their important interesting instruction. For notwithstanding a spurious passage has been introduced in St. *John's* first epistle concerning the witnesses, yet the interpolation has been discovered from many of the best and most ancient Greek copies*. And we might expect the purity and integrity of the canon would be preserved, since the autographs of apostles would be immediately or very soon transcribed, and then translated into different languages. Nay, the first publishers of the Gospel were qualified, by the supernatural gift of tongues, to deliver the Gospel-message in the different languages and dialects of the different people and nations, wherever they came. And as the original scriptures were held in the highest esteem by all Christians, so it was that in all controversies which arose among them, a constant appeal was made to these writings. And because in every age of the church, Christians have had different interpretations of some mere figurative passages in this sacred code, hence the eye of jealousy would be kept open, and perpetually fixed on the written record; which must have prevented any material alteration being made in that decisive divine standard. And when we add, that an *Anathema* was most solemnly denounced † on any who should attempt

* It is not in the most ancient copies of the Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, or Armenian Bibles, nor in the most ancient Latin Bibles. *Brief Hist. of Unitarians*, p. 43. "Not found in any one ancient copy in Christendom——nor in any one ancient version or translation——nor in any one ancient commentary; nor in any one citation till about the 15th Century." See the *Scripture Account of the attributes and worship of God: and of the character and offices of Jesus Christ*.—printed 1750.

† See Gal. i. 8, 9. Apoc. xxii. 18, 19.

44 *On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.*

attempt a change of the sacred text; I should conclude, we may be infallibly certain of its purity and integrity.—

Even from Ecclesiastical testimony, so early as the beginning of the 3d century, this should appear, since *Tertullian* says, “ we lay down this
“ as a certain fundamental truth, that the
“ Evangelic scriptures (or instruments) have for
“ their authors the apostles, or apostolical-men, to
“ whom the work of publishing the Gospel was
“ committed by our Lord himself.”—And *again*,
“ if it be certain that is most genuine which is
“ most ancient, and that most ancient which is
“ from the beginning, and that from the begin-
“ ning which is from the apostles; in like manner
“ it will be also certain THAT has been delivered
“ from the apostles which is held sacred in the
“ churches of the apostles. Let us then see what
“ milk the Corinthians received from St. Paul;
“ to what rule the Galatians were reduced; what
“ the Philippians read; what the Theffalonians;
“ what the Ephesians; and likewise what the
“ Romans recite, who are near us: with whom
“ both Peter and Paul left the Gospel sealed with
“ their blood.”—And this reason he assigns for
the propriety of such authentic instruments being
preserved sacred in the churches, *viz.* “ foral-
“ much as the preaching of the disciples might
“ have been suspected as liable to the charge
“ of a desire of glory, if not supported by the
“ authority of the masters, yea of Christ who
“ made the apostles masters.” *Once more*, *Tertullian*
says, “ well, if you be willing to exercise your
“ curiosity profitably in the business of your
“ salvation, visit the apostolical churches, in
“ which the very chairs of the apostles yet preside,
“ in

“ in which their very *authentic letters* * are recited,
“ sounding forth the voice, and representing the
“ countenance of each one of them — as at
“ Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus and Rome. † ”

Admit the credibility of this testimony, there was no possibility of men's being deceived, as to the purity and integrity of the sacred canon, at the beginning of the 3d century : and if so, there does not appear, to me, any probability that it could be changed in any after-age of the church. If any one should doubt of this, I would ask him, whether he can conceive of a possibility there is of making a change of the Gospel record in the present age, notwithstanding the general shocking depravity of Christians?—

Thus, I trust, it must appear, with satisfactory evidence, that the faith of the Christian has no existence in the artifice, cunning, wisdom, or authority of men ; but only in the wisdom and power of God. In truth, as St. Paul would hint to us, we need look no farther than into the doctrine of a crucified Jesus, in order to convince us, that the Gospel scheme could never be the result of human invention, device, or contrivance. — One might add, not any thing can be more evident, than that all former divine revelations and dispensations were *preparatory* to this last, under the Messiah's kingdom.

Thus the doctrinal instruction has been attempted : and some useful observations may now be made upon that truly divine instruction.—

I. If

* By authentic letters, he meaneth the originals themselves. See *Dr. Lardner's Credib.* vol. ii. p. 559.

† Ibid. p. 577, 578.

46 *On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.*

I. If I understand the apostle's reasoning throughout this context, New Testament teachings could receive no advantage in their address to mankind, from any studied rules of oratory. There is such a divine simplicity, plainness, and irresistible weight in their principles, motives, and reasoning, that the more men would affect to put on them the ornaments of a flowery rhetorical address, or the paintings of a fine imagination, the less will their native beauties be conspicuous: or the more they are covered with the artist's colourings, the less will the pure original rays of divine truth and grace display the wisdom and power of God. Hence the very best judges of their vast importance have ever proposed, that a translation of the sacred text into any language should be as *literal* as the established idioms of that language will permit. And we have ever unhappily found the *liberal* to be no better than a licentious translation. Men sadly forget themselves, when they fancy a devised imagery of their own can add a beauty and energy to the sacred text, in its native original divine dress.

It has been before observed, that it is probable St. Paul had not a very musical voice, nor the striking abilities of the fine orator. But if he had acquired them at the feet of Gamaliel, under whom he pursued his studies, he would make no use of them in his apostolic labours. The truth and grace of God stood in no need of such helps, in order to impress teachable minds. And hence it is he says, "brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellence of speech, or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God."—In one word, divine teachings borrow no additional energy from the best speaker in the world. Musical tones and vibrations are too momentary,

mentary, mechanical, and passionate; they rather entertain, than instruct; they rather amuse, than impress. Had rhetorical address been needful, St. Paul's want of the powers of elocution would have unfitted him for the apostolate.

Ildly, Human authority is not, never was, nor never may be a foundation, on which religion can support. So that the civil power can have nothing to do authoritatively in religion.—At the same time, it must be owned, there are several apostolic injunctions on Christian people, to reverence their inspired instructors. Such as, 1 Tim. v. 17. "Let the elders that *RULE* well, be "counted worthy of double honour." And Heb. xiii. 7. "Remember them who have the *rule* over "you: who have spoken to you the word of God; "whose faith follow."—*Again*, ver. 17. "Obey "them that have the *rule* over you, and submit "yourselves; for they watch for your souls as "those who must give an account."—But then nothing is more plain, than that this reverence, this obedience, this submission, was wholly owing to the authority of that divine message which they delivered, and not to any personal claims of these teachers. It is therefore evident, that the demand of reverence could only be made by virtue of that message. Just so the people were required to receive the first Gospel messengers, as God's ambassadors. See 2 Cor. v. 20. Math. x. 14. And whoever did not, "they were to shake the dust off their "feet, as a testimony against them." But in no other light were apostles objects of such reverence. For this apostle says, "not that we have "dominion over your faith.—And we preach not "ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and "ourselves your servants for Jesus sake." 2 Cor. i. 24.—iv. 5.—They are not Christians who
receive

48 *On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.*

receive honour one of another, and not the honour which comes from God only. Joh. v. 44.

When once the truth and grace of God, as revealed by Jesus Christ and his apostles, had been committed to writing, and the churches were possessed of those writings; when the apostles had thus finished their labors, no authority could then remain any where else in the Christian-church, but in those writings. And every individual Christian became equally concerned with and interested in them. Had these writings been every where religiously attended to, and at all times, none would ever have dreamed of church-governors, and church-government, exercised by fanciful fallible deputies, or frail vicars of the one Lord. But men who preside in Christian-churches, and lead the public worship upon the Gospel plan, can have no authority, nor any thing like jurisdiction.—This has been the case even with all those called BISHOPS, both in Denmark and Sweden; and for aught I know, may yet be the case with them, to this day.

It is an undoubted truth, that the most learned of the Christian world are themselves altogether as much amenable to the divine authority of the New Testament writings, as the most illiterate Christian can possibly be, and these very scriptures are equally an obligatory rule to them, as they can be to any others. Nay, I will add, these very scriptures, when read justly by a mechanic, have as much authority, as when they are read by any priest or prelate whatsoever. It cannot be otherwise, since they borrow no authority at all from man! and all true Christians are a royal priesthood! 1 Pet. ii. 9. And therefore are equally qualified to offer up Gospel sacrifices.
Heb.

Heb. xiii. 15.—This then is a just observation, viz. “that human authority can no where operate “in the Christian church.”

IIldly, Since that *power of God*, in which the faith of the Christian has all its existence, does certainly import his truth and grace, we may clearly understand all those passages in the New Testament, which ascribe the sanctification and salvation of men to *the power of God*.—Even the Gospel itself, is, for this reason, said to be “the power of God to salvation, to all that “believe.” Rom. i. 16. “And the preaching of “the cross, is, to all who are saved, the power of “God.” 1 Cor. i. 18. And so *Christ*, or his Gospel, is said to be both the power of God, and the wisdom of God, v. 14.—To the same purpose St. Peter speaks of Christians, “as kept by the “power of God,” i. e. by the power of his truth and grace, through faith unto salvation. 1 epistle i. 5.

The power of God, whenever applied to the salvation of men, does therefore manifestly intend, that efficacious influence which the divine teachings of his written word, have had upon the human mind, in its renovation and sanctification. Which exactly agrees with other reports made of the great design of the Gospel. Such as that of 2 Thess. ii. 13. “Ye are chosen from the beginning, “(i. e. of the Gospel age) through sanctification “of the Spirit, even a belief of the truth, as “it is in Jesus.” And again, Eph. iv. 24. we are said to be “created in righteousness, and in “the truth of holiness.” Likewise men who form themselves upon Gospel-Teachings, are also said to be spiritually-minded. Rom. viii, beginning.

50 *On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.*

Thus the salutary power of God, when applied to human minds, denotes, that efficacious influence and effect which his truth and grace have upon them, in attempering and disposing to order and rectitude every of their elections and determinations. For whenever his will becomes ours, and we have no other governing desire but that of being approved by him, it may then be very justly said, that our faith, or that exercise of the mind, which is the habitual pious principle, does not exist in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Now, at all times, the Gospel-rule of faith is expressive of such divine power.

IVthly, This exercise of faith in the energy and efficacy of divine truth and grace, is what distinguishes and discriminates human characters. So in the context, our apostle has observed, that there is a *natural*, and there is a *spiritual* man: and that the one knows not the things of the other, i. e. the natural man has no idea of those exertions and fruitions which belong to the spiritual man. And the reason is obvious; since the natural man has no higher principle which guides and governs him, than what is sensitive, viz. his animal feelings and passions. Temporal, perishing good is his prime object, and he knows of nothing more desirable than to gratify these propensities. He knows not what it is to live by faith in the power of God; for he lives only by sight. He has no conception of what it can mean, “to have his affections set on things above; and not on things on the earth.” His tastes and relishes, his principles, sentiments, and spirit, are of a very reverse complexion, to those of the spiritual man; consequently, they must form very disagreeing opposite characters.

Neither

Neither can we wonder it should be so, since the one has no other final *home*, than this transitory, short-lived, bodily tenement; nor any other pleasing gratifications, but what arise from this material system. — Whereas the other is here but a *stranger*, and is looking for a more durable habitation, an house that is from heaven. All his most delightful expectancies, are, of an everlasting inheritance! — The one has all his good things in hand; the other has all his good things in hope. The one has only a creaturely-good as his portion; the other has the Creator himself for his unfailing object of fruition. — The origin and source of this difference of characters, is, the one is conversant with, and daily lives upon the truth and grace of God, as revealed in the Gospel: the other has no desire of, no taste, no relish for the New Testament teachings; but allows himself to remain deplorably ignorant of them: or, at least, never takes the pains to enter into the spirit and power of those teachings. Once more; this exercise of faith, is what distinguishes the rational Christian from the enthusiast, since it always is the result of convincing evidence, See Heb. xi. 1. For says a learned writer, “That man who can believe *without* reason, is in next capacity to believe *against* it*.”

Vthly, The abundant evidence we have of the purity and integrity of the New Testament canon, is a cogent reason of thanksgiving and praise. A general review of that evidence, I am of opinion, may be thus taken—Gospel-Teachings do contain every of the first principles of natural religion, separated from any adulteration, whether

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* Spencer's Disc. on Prodigies, p. 254.

52 *On the divine Purity of the Gospel-Canon.*

ther from idolatry, superstitious depraving idea, or foreign ritual. The canon has not one mark of human invention upon it; either in principle, spirit, maxims, motive, or even mode of worship. Its address is immediate to every man, as intimately and equally concerned therein, both as a rule of life, and as an universal standard of the final judgment. The New Testament in our own language, we have reason to conclude, is so faithful and just a translation, that it has the same divine authenticity with the autographs of apostles; inasmuch as it produces the same moral, benign, and salutary effects on every mind, which is formed upon its heavenly teachings. It is thus, and thus only that any can know experimentally or efficaciously, that it is both the wisdom and power of God. And because the unlearned Christian is as capable of a truly saving use of that divine canon, from the judgment he makes for himself of its teachings, as the most learned can; he may rest fully satisfied with the evidence. He will do so, as it gives him a rational, settled, self-complacency, an established serenity, and a peace of mind that passes all understanding——as it makes him a blessing to all around him——as it gives him confidence in Almighty God; and renders him superior to all temptation. In fact, therefore, the appeal which it makes to the reason, understanding, and experience of all mankind, is what throws the utmost confusion on the face of the conceited infidel: and will do no less on the immoral believer.

DISCOURSE III.

On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.

AFTER having investigated the unity of the Gospel system; and—also the pure, unmixed, divine originality of its teachings; we are next to treat upon its UNIVERSALITY. I know not of any idea that can be formed of God's grace and mercy, that is more adorable than when under the consideration of its impartiality and universality. It is certain, that both St. Peter and St. Paul do lay a great emphasis upon the Deity's being *no respecter of persons*; i. e. upon his being no way capricious, no way arbitrary in his favours; on the contrary, we are assured, that he would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved! Nay, even an Hebrew prophet, I mean one in old time, 600 years before Christ, could represent the supreme Being as expressly declaring, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn and live *."—

There is in truth something extremely disgustful to an humane, an ingenuous mind, in any contracted, monopolizing conceptions, or limitations of the divine goodness. The idea is only found in little, mean, systematic, contemptible spirits, who would engross the favour of God to them-

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felves :

* Ezek. xviii. 32.

54 *On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.*

selves : or, who can imagine none to be the proper objects of his love, but what are of their own ungenerous, illiberal, and depraved complexion.—

I shall therefore attempt an illustration of the *universality* of the truth and grace of God, in Gospel address, from that exordium of St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. first, verses first, second, and third :

“ Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ,
“ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our
“ brother — unto the church of God which
“ is at Corinth,—to them that are sanctified in
“ Christ Jesus, called Saints ; with all that in
“ every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ
“ our Lord, both theirs and ours.—Grace unto
“ you and peace from God our Father, and the
“ Lord Jesus Christ.”

It may be proper to observe, “ that Corinth
“ was a populous, rich, and ancient mercantile
“ city, the chief of Achaia, or of Greece ; a
“ place of great resort for the traffic of very dif-
“ ferent remote countries.” And as to the ac-
counts transmitted of them,—“ they were a people
“ of a quick and lively genius, and had a kind
“ of university, which was supplied with orators
“ and philosophers ; and great numbers of Jews
“ dwelt there, who had a synagogue.—”

Again,—This first epistle which St. Paul sent to the Christian-church at Corinth, is supposed to have been written from Ephesus at the beginning of the year 56.—And that it was written from Ephesus, should appear from ch. xvi. 8. where
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the apostle tells them, he will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost *.

The reason why St. Paul puts *Softbenes* along with himself in the beginning of this first epistle to that church, I should conjecture to be this; Softbenes had been the chief ruler of the Jewish synagogue at Corinth, (who was now with him at Ephesus;) and had greatly suffered on Paul's account, having been openly beaten by the Greeks, even under the eye of Gallio, the governor of Corinth; as St. Luke informs us, Acts xviii. 17. It was therefore quite natural for him to join Softbenes with himself, in this friendly salutation made to his fellow-citizens; thereby shewing his truly Christian-spirit; and accordingly, St. Paul affectionately calls him, THE BROTHER.—

Having premised thus much, we now proceed to consider this apostolical address; which appears to be a kind of dedication of his epistle to that church.—In treating upon it we may,

I. Notice the manner in which this apostle asserts his divine mission.

II. The universality of his message.

III. With what authority it is that he pronounceth grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, on all genuine Christians.

As to the manner in which this apostle asserts his divine mission—he thus expresses himself,

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“ Paul

* Consult Mr. *Locke's* Paraphrase — and Dr. *Lardner's* Suppl. vol. II. p. 170.

56 *On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.*

“ Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will
 “ of God.”—There are not any words or phrases,
 which could have been more expressive of his
 mission being divine ; for he is well assured it was
 through, by, or according to the will of God,
 that Jesus Christ had appointed him to the office
 of an apostle ; which office had respect to his
 preaching the Gospel to mankind, and to his
 planting the churches among Gentiles. The
 extraordinary manner in which he was called to
 the apostolate, St. Luke has related with great
 precision. And in St. Paul’s epistle to the Gala-
 tians, very express mention is made of that hea-
 venly interview which he had with Christ. That
 same epistle, I would observe, was written there
 years before this to the Corinthians : in which he
 speaks of himself in the very same style—“ Paul
 “ an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but
 “ by Jesus Christ, and God the Father,—who
 “ raised him from the dead.”—In truth and fact,
 he had all the evidence both of inspiration and
 of the power of working miracles, to enable him
 thus to speak of his mission. And in this epistle
 to the church at Corinth, ch. ix. 1. he is able
 to make this most open appeal, “ Am I not an
 “ apostle ? Have I not seen Christ Jesus our
 “ Lord ?”—And in his second epistle, he mentions
 both the revelations with which he had been
 honoured, and the miracles which he had actually
 wrought among them, when he first planted the
 Christian-church at Corinth, See chap. xii. 1, and
 12.—From which accounts, the divinity of his
 mission is unquestionable.—

Secondly,—We are next to attend to the *uni-
 versality* of his address. “ Unto the church of
 “ God, which is at Corinth, to them which are
 “ sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Saints, with
 “ all

“all that in every place call on the name of
“Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

Now it is evident, that by the sanctified, or the Saints, St. Paul meant, all that were or should in any age be separated from a love of the world, by virtue of their faith in Gospel-Teachings.—Men, who are God’s peculiar people, by reason of their departure from all iniquity, by their denial of all ungodliness, by their living soberly, righteously, and godly; and by their being zealous of good works. This gives the full sense of the terms, *sanctified* and *Saints*. Though sometimes, indeed, we may find the word *Saints* used indiscriminately for all professing Christians; thus emphatically distinguishing them from an unbelieving world.

Further,—Not only does our apostle inscribe his epistle to the Christians at Corinth, “but to ALL
“in every place who call upon the name of Jesus
“Christ our Lord:” or, in other words, all who profess his religion. And moreover, as if not satisfied with saying, that Jesus was his Lord, he adds, *both theirs and ours*. He would have the fullest emphasis laid upon the divine relation, in which all genuine Christians do equally stand to this exalted glorified man, whom the one God has constituted the one Lord, or head of his church.

Neither shall we have the least reason to call in question the universality of the written apostolic canon, when we are assured from the mouth of Jesus himself, that his divine mission was originally intended for the benefit and salvation of all mankind. “God so loved the world, that he
“gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever
“believeth

58 *On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.*

“ believeth on him should not perish, but have
 “ eternal life.”—*Again*, he says, “ I am the light of
 “ the world. — And whosoever followeth me,
 “ shall have the light of life.”—And *once more*,
 “ I give my flesh for the life of the world.”—
 Besides these declarations, there are some yet more
 explicit, as that of *John* x. 16. “ I have other
 “ sheep which are not of this fold: them also I
 “ must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and
 “ there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”
 And *Luke* xxiv. 46, 47. “ Thus it is written,
 “ and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to
 “ rise from the dead on the third day; and that
 “ repentance and remission of sins should be preach-
 “ ed in his name, AMONG ALL NATIONS, begin-
 “ ning at Jerusalem.”

Such full assurance have we that the written
 records of apostles were intended for the benefit
 both of all nations and all ages of men. And for
 this reason St. John says, “ these things are
 “ WRITTEN that ye might believe that Jesus is
 “ the Christ; and that believing ye might have
 “ life through his name.” The many references
 made to the writings of Moses and the Prophets,
 both by our Lord, and by his apostles, will not
 suffer us to imagine, that the teachings of the
 Son of God should be left to the great uncertainty
 of unwritten, or of oral tradition: so that we may
 be absolutely certain, the last revelation of the
 truth and grace of God, should be, by a written
 record, most securely transmitted from age to age
 for the benefit of mankind.

Again,—The universality of the teachings of the
 written canon, might be argued from both their
 primary and ultimate moral intention; *viz.* their
 separating all who cordially embrace them, from
 idolatry,

On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings. 59

idolatry, superstition, worldliness and vice; from their rendring men rational, regular, holy and heavenly. From sublimating their ideas and sentiments, refining their tastes and relishes, giving them that principle and spirit, which realizes their existence, and securing them of a blissful immortality; for, in truth, men who are called into the fellowship of the son of God, are daily "enriching with knowledge, and confirming in all goodness; even so as to be found blameless in the day of Christ." 1 Cor. i. 5, 8.

Again,—If we give credit to the Gospel-history of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, we must be firmly persuaded that these apostolic writings are intended for the universal and perpetual use and saving benefit of mankind, because of their vast moment and infinite importance. They best explain the nature of the divine constitutions; they best exhibit the plan of God's kingdom and moral government; and are that full medium of light and life, whereby we are rendered capable of entring into the true spirit and power of religion. It is in these great respects, men are made wise unto salvation; even by exploring the divine scheme in all the ministrations of Christ Jesus, and in every of his exalted appointments. It is in them that we see, how his advancement to supreme sovereignty has the most favourable aspect on all the children of men.

Gospel-Teachings, as they lye in the written canon, do likewise shew us, with the utmost precision, how the ignorances and prejudices of the human intellect, and the depraved passions of the human heart, do operate; what abusive ideas, and disgustful sentiments men did at first discover, in opposition to Gospel address; and besides this,

60 *On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.*

this, the many corruptions, and shocking absurdities that would be found under the grand apostacy. We have likewise in this heavenly canon, all the excellence and perfection of divine teachings which respect the first principles of truth and mercy; all the purity and power of precept; all the greatness of mind and benevolence of heart which they inspire; all the simplicity and spirituality of worship; and together with this, the majesty and everlasting worth of its motive, and the great encouragement it gives to the hope and desire of man.—

Had not St. Paul known, that Gospel-Teachings are far above all others, emphatically the *wisdom* of God, and the *power* of God, in the influence and effect which they have on the human mind, he would not have so pathetically inscribed his epistle to Christians in all places, and of all future ages of the world! But in truth, he was confident that it sanctifies all sincere believers, renders them holy, and secures them both of present inconceivable benefits, and also of an everlasting blessedness! all whom Gospel-truth sanctifies, Gospel-grace saves; all whom the one sanctifies, the other glorifies.

A yet further reason may be given for the universality of the New Testament code; and that is, the appointed authorised judge has expressly affirmed, that it is the fixed decisive standard or rule of the final judgment. See Joh. xii. 48. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." Which perfectly agrees with the doctrine our Lord taught of himself, John v. 22. "The father hath committed all judgment
" to

On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings. 61

“to the son; that all men should honour the son.”——But this they could not do, under the character of judge, unless they were made acquainted with the rule on which he will conduct the judgment.——Now this very *rule* they expressly have in the New Testament writings; for our apostle tells the Christians at Rome, “that God shall judge the secrets of men according to his Gospel.” Rom. ii. 16. And in his second epistle to the Corinthians, chap. v. *ver.* 10. he says, “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things in his body, according to that he has done, whether good or bad.”

Now, upon the whole, it is not at all probable, that the great God should have constituted the man Christ Jesus judge both of quick and dead, having revealed both his truth and his grace by him, and yet, not have given mankind an express written-standard or rule of the judgment. There would be an absurdity in the supposition. And we are constrained to conclude, that that written rule must be universally interesting.—But we find, in fact, that the sacred volume gives us the very *ratio* of the sentence which must pass on all good and bad men, of every age and nation. Such as have had but one talent, shall be answerable only for one talent—and he who has had ten, shall be answerable for the improvement of every one of those numerous talents.——In the case of the one talent,—“as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law.” The dictates of natural conscience, or of reason unenlightened by revelation, will render man accountable. They assure us, that the truly religious Gentile was an object of the divine approbation, as in the case of Cornelius, *Acts* x. 1—4.—So the Gentiles
“who

62 On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.

“ who have not the law, yet do by nature the things contained in the law, are a law unto themselves.” Rom. ii. 14. — Such are the abilities of the human mind, that mankind are universally accountable: for God has not any where left himself without witness. — Of this, and of the extent of moral obligation, the apostolic writings do inform us, with great perspicuity and the utmost precision. *Truth* makes an open and common appeal to the reason, understanding, and conscience of man. Or, as *Puffendorf* somewhere expresses it, — “ the law of nature must be drawn from the reason of man, when the faculty is free and unbiaſſed by prejudices or passions. — “ The dictates of right reason are true principles, “ which agree with the nature of things well “ observed and examined.” In this sense the Gospel is a rule, as it teaches the *ratio* of the final judgment. But this will be yet more evident when we consider, that the teachings of Jesus do remove all obscurities which had been thrown on the law of nature, and do restore it to its original purity, spirit and power. So much for the universality.

We proposed in the next place to shew,

Thirdly, — With what authority it is, that St. Paul pronounces grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, on all genuine Christians? I know not whether this idea has been sufficiently attended unto, or has had much place in the minds of many professors; but here is a divine benefit derived from the apostolic writings, which none other writings in the world could ever boast. For verily the Christian who enters into the spirit of them has, from the pen of an inspired apostle, who had every divine credential,

grace

grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, authoritatively pronounced upon him. The benediction he can rely upon, as having an undoubtedly divine meaning. Nay, these unspeakable blessings are absolutely insured to him. And they are not only reverfionary good things, but of what he has at present, some degree of possession. Yea, such is their comprehensive extent, that they contain in them all that is requisite to make him comfortable and happy.—Indeed, whatever can be meant by *grace and peace*, from their infinite source, and from the appointed medium of conveyance, is to be found in the New Testament writings. They shew us, that by *grace*, we are to understand the favour of the Almighty towards us; even his being our God and Father. For not only does he interest us in himself as the supreme and everlasting governor, whose laws we reverence and obey, whose will we would always be observing; but he is known as a tender parent who has complacency in, or who looks upon us as his dutiful children.—He has expressly declared, he does so look upon us, because we have chosen to come out from among, and are actually separated from a world which lies in wickedness. It is of his grace and favour, that we receive such plain and full information of both what he would have us do and be. And we are privileged with those great and precious promises which are *yea* and *amen* unto us, under this last dispensation: therefore there can be no possibility of our being deceived or disappointed in those hopes, which they raise and feed in our breasts. For verily, they are, like their author, immutable, and can never fail us.—So much for the GRACE which is in the benediction.—

But

04 On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.

But besides this, there is PEACE, i. e. there is enough in the Gospel-Covenant to calm, compose, and quiet the mind under whatever circumstance of the present trial. Enough to banish all disquieting, distressing fears; and enough to remove all painful apprehensions about a future-state of being.—For though we have, in many things, all of us offended and come short of the glory of God; yet, adored be his sovereign grace and goodness, we have the utmost assurance given us, that repentance and reformation do appear to be fruits meet for remission. And we can depend upon his readiness to receive us graciously and love us freely. That he will withhold from us no good things, but make all events co-operate for our final good. And as this is our safe and comfortable condition, no ruffling anxieties should have an abiding lodgment in our breasts; no present affliction however heavy or painful, should hinder the patient possession of our souls.—But then, we must give evidence, that the peace which religion bestows, is a peace of God, i. e. a most excellent peace; which passes all understanding; as it garrisons or keeps the heart through Christ Jesus.—The man who is justified by faith, he has peace with God. Rom. v. 1.

Let us next attend to the *form* of the benediction.

“Grace unto you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” Why the apostle mentions both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, is easy to be accounted for; since God is the origin and source of the grace and peace; and Jesus Christ, as the revealer of the Father, is the channel of conveyance, or the instrument of communication. There are no less than thirteen of St. Paul’s epistles which have this form

form of benediction *, which shews, the great emphasis he had laid upon it: And which seems almost peculiar to this apostle. Nor can we wonder it should be so familiar to his address, when we consider the transporting interview he had had with the exalted Jesus, who so illustriously revealed the grace and mercy of God to him; shewing forth in him all long-suffering, as a *pattern* or type of his giving peace to all who embrace the Gospel-Teachings.—1 Tim. i. 16.—During the life of this apostle, none of the others do appear to have had so much personal intercourse with the ascended Jesus. For as to the visions of St. John, which are called the Apocalypse, these were probably about the year 95 or 96, long after the death of St. Paul.—So that in nothing was he behind the very chiefest of the apostles; for, even Peter, James, and John, who were present at their Lord's transfiguration, saw his glory and were eye-witnesses of his majesty, did not equal St. Paul's revelations.—We cannot therefore at all wonder, that a mind so much animated with Gospel-grace, should be accustomed so pathetically to announce the blessedness which is the inheritance of all true Christians: and because men may perceive him *divinely authorized* to pronounce the benediction, this assuredly gives the serious and attentive eye, a matchless pleasure in reading his epistles.

Lastly,—I shall proceed to make some useful observations. And

E

I. Whereas

* Rom. i. 7. 1 Cor. i. 3. 2 Eph. i. 2. Gal. i. 3. Eph. i. 2. Phil. i. 2. Col. i. 2. 1 Theff. i. 1.—2 Ep. i. 2. 1 Tim. i. 2.—2 Ep. i. 2. Tit. i. 4. Philem. 3. and similar to these, is that of Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

66 *On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.*

I. Whereas St. Paul was the great apostle of the Gentiles, who had all divine attestations to his apostolic-mission, we, the descendants of idolatrous Gentiles, should be filled with thankfulness and praise to God for the inexpressible benefit of his writings! and should delightfully look upon them as intended for the saving benefit of all true believers, in every age and nation. Whenever therefore we read his Gospel-Instructions, we should regard him as writing every whit as properly to us, as to any of the primitive churches which were his immediate care and charge.—What then if he, and all the other apostles, did die within the limits of the first, and we live in the latter part of the 18th century? This makes no difference in respect to the capital doctrines and instructions, which are found in his epistles:—or, as St. *Peter* speaks, “though all flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass—though the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away—yet the word of the Lord endureth for ever: and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto us.” The apostle to the Hebrews, has accordingly thus expressed the invariable truth and grace of Gospel-Teachings, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.”—Nor could they be otherwise than immutable, eternal truth; because the apostles who delivered these writings to the world, “are, on their account, a sweet savour of God in them that are saved, and in them that perish. In the one, the favour of life unto life; in the other, the favour of death unto death.”——2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

It is not in the power of any of us to render their writings of less importance; for whether we will, or will not read them; or whether we read

On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings. 67

read them with a cold indifference, or else with a serious and religious attention, as a divine canon, they will have their respective established effects: i. e. either to enlighten, and enliven our spirits, or else to determine our obstinate and criminal inattention to these last teachings of God. It is not in the power of any being whatsoever to prevent these consequences. And the shutting our eyes upon, or hardning our hearts against their instructions, will be no apology. In a word, they are a divine talent, in which we have infinitely more concern, than we can possibly have with any thing else in the whole world. A neglect or contempt of them must therefore be fatal! For unless we are able to prove, that they are not expressive of the truth and grace of God, or that they have no divine authority, it will be at our everlasting peril, if we are found trifling with the New Testament canon. But, on the contrary, when we consider its salutary divine intention, our gratitude should be excited, and we ought to be filled with thankfulness and praise for that system of heavenly instruction.

II. Since the manifest design and end of the apostolic writings, is to sanctify or separate men from worldliness and vice, and to enable them to keep free from the dominion of lust; the sceptic or infidel must certainly stand condemned: because he rejects the most open address that was ever made to man, of divine truth and grace. He may say or think just what he pleaseth,—these writings have all the possible intrinsic marks and evidences of the will of an all-perfect Being: for, assuredly, that which recovers the mind from ignorance, immorality, and vicious taste, to just conception, to rectitude of desire and aversion, and confirms in all the paths of piety and virtue, cannot but

68 *On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.*

have a divine original, and demand a religious reverence.

Should any object and say,—“ if these writings
“ which you call apostolical, are of divine autho-
“ rity, and were intended for universal use, how
“ comes it to pass, that they are not every where
“ received as such; and made the standard of
“ religious idea, sentiment, and conduct to all
“ nations ?”

The answer would be ready at hand; for this reason, they are not; *viz.* because man was originally made and ever left *free*, either to attend unto, or not; to receive, or to reject them, and by an abuse of this freedom the world, more generally, lies in wickedness. “ The God of this
“ world, i. e. a love of the world having blinded
“ the eyes of men, that they should not obey the
“ truth.” Consequently, since the Gospel has no compulsive force in its address, though it is most expressive of the truth and grace of God, this will account for its non-universality. For though our blessed Lord, during his ministrations in Judea, *spoke so as never man spake*, i. e. with far more authority than any of their instructors; yet, very few did cordially receive his message, or own his divine mission: and he gives this reason of their inattention and infidelity, “ They have ears to
“ hear, but they will not hear,—they love darkness
“ rather than light, because their deeds are evil.
“ Therefore they will not come to the light, lest
“ their deeds should be reprov’d :” i. e. lest their deeds should appear to them in all their deformity and malignity. On this account it is, that they hate the light.—Nay, so very depraved were the generality of the Jewish nation, though separated from the rest of mankind by a special
provi-

On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings. 69

providence, that “they would not come to him, that they might have life.” John v. 40.—

And here it might be shewn, with undeniable evidence, that the Gospel is as completely fitted to become an universal standard rule, to guide mankind in the path of safety and life, as the elementary light of the sun, is, to assist the eye of man in his bodily operations, and his local movements, as well as to aid his studious attentions to sundry written volumes of the arts and sciences. Nay, Gospel-Teachings might be shewn, to be as well adapted to the end of becoming a moral divine standard of universal order and regularity; as the rational powers given to man are to the purpose of guiding, rectifying, and governing, his appetites and passions.—But in each of these cases, there are vast numbers of the human family, who are inattentive to the manifest design and end both of the natural and the moral luminary. e.g. How dreadfully common is it for mankind to make a perverse use both of the elementary light, and of their own intellectual faculties and powers! But does this very extensive egregious perversion prove, that either the light of the sun, or that candle of the Lord, *reason*, were not intended for universal guidance or instruction. Whatever therefore may be the parts of the habitable globe, which are not under the illumination of the Gospel, it can be no manner of objection to its being fitted for universal instruction*.—We can well account for its being refused admittance in the wide dominions of the impostor, *Mahomet*; and in those extensive regions of *popery*, where its lamp is put under a bushel.

* Christ is styled, emphatically, THE TEACHER, — the chief guide and instructor: i. e. the way, the truth, and the life.—John iii, 2. ch. viii. 12. xiv. 6. Heb. xii. 2.

bushel. Upon the whole, as well might an objection be formed against the light of nature's being divine and intended for universal benefit, as against that of the Gospel revelation being so, because of the vast numbers, who despise, abuse, or neglect the light of the one and of the other.

The infidel or the sceptic, has therefore no reasonable excuse; nor can he make any rational apology, for his rejecting the New Testament canon, because of the non-universality of its reception.—

III. All men whatsoever, stand censured and condemned, who can either speak or think contemptuously of sanctification: i. e. of a separation of the mind from all worldly lustings.—And yet, there are not a few who dare to make the appellative, SAINT, a subject of sneer and ridicule. They can play off much raillery upon this divine compellation: and use the term with mockery and derision. Whereas, there is not one single prophane character in all the world so justly respectable, as the man whom the truth and grace of God have sanctified, whatever his external circumstance or condition *. Hence the ridicule will return with great force upon the worldling, as the most debased and contemptible of the human family.

It is proper, that we should reason a little closely upon this theme—Pray, what is the precise or exact idea that we should form of a *Saint*?

Why, in truth and fact, it is no other than that
“ of

* Advert to the Parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings. 71

“ of a rational creature habitually reverencing his “ maker.” One, whom the teachings of reason, nature, and revelation have informed and enlightened; made regular and consistent in all his powers and passions.—One that has thereby attained unto, or recovered the original rectitude of his frame; having his imagination, appetites, and passions subjected to reason and conscience: one who has no volitions, no elections, no determinations, but what are directed by the known will of the supremely adorable sovereign.

It must then be a proof of very depraved taste, when any can ridicule or despise what gives the true dignity and glory of man. But truly, it is none who do so, but the ignorant and impious, the vain and wanton, that are incapable of seeing the beauties of holiness; the charms which there are in piety and virtue.—But unhappily their carnalities, their sensualities, their debaucheries have rendered them such deplorable strangers to the sanctifying influences of TRUTH.—

I cannot forbear observing, that in the last session of parliament, some speeches made by several of our senators, borrowed phrases and passages peculiar to the sacred writings, in order to give a poignancy to their wit! at the same time, they afford no proof of the reverence which is religiously due to the truth and grace of God—but it is to be feared, are little better than the effusion of scorners;—and they would do well to remember what Jesus Christ said to Saul,—*It is hard for thee to kick against the goads!*

Further,—Pray tell us, if you can, what real excellence, or what true merit is to be found in a man, whom the truth of God has not sanctified?

72 *On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.*

—Whatever may be his present state or condition, he is one whom the divine mercy cannot save.— Let me tell you, men might, upon the same *ratio*, reproach, or speak prophanely and irreverently of the holiness of God, as of the holiness of those of his creatures whom his truth has sanctified; creatures who bear his image, and reflect his glory. The subject is therefore of much too serious and important a nature, ever to become the subject of ridicule or of raillery: it must be so, “Since
“ *without holiness no man can see the Lord.*”—
Heb. xii. 14.

IV. How peculiarly delightful, and beneficial must it be, for Christians to consult religiously the apostolic writings; since they do authoritatively pronounce grace and peace, on all who give them such attention?—I have before observed, that this very form of benediction is to be found in thirteen of St. Paul's epistles, or in all that have his name. And would now remark, that St. *Peter* has something very analogous; for he wisheth,—“ That
“ grace and peace may be multiplied on those
“ to whom he wrote.” Such benediction is found in both his epistles.—And St. *John's* first epistle has these reports,—*viz.* “ God is light! and
“ God is love!”—Nay, his second epistle has a very similar address—“ Grace, mercy and peace
“ from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus
“ Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and
“ love.”—— So St. *Jude* calls himself “ the
“ servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the brother
“ of James:” and at the same time, he ascribes his epistle “ to them who are sanctified by God
“ the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, and
“ called.”—And then announceth, “ mercy unto
“ you and peace, and love be multiplied.” And though St. *James* has not this form of address,

yet he has something equivalent, for he observes, "that every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor the shadow of turning."—From all which declarations, I would here observe, that there is no such doctrine taught in the New Testament writings, as that of the distinct *personality* of the Spirit; nor the peculiar office of a sanctifier ever once assigned to such distinct person.—

On the contrary; St. *Jude* expressly says, "that men are sanctified by God the Father." *Jude*, *ver.* 1.—Hence wherever the sanctification of the Spirit is mentioned, it cannot intend any thing else, but the truth and grace of God; for these are the Spirit of the Gospel; they are the Spirit and power of that dispensation. Agreeable to which, as hath been observed, Jesus saith, "my words they are Spirit, and they are life." Every where, throughout Gospel-Teachings, we are led to fix our eyes on God the Father, as the fountain or infinite source of the grace, mercy and peace.

And thus it is that we are kept from all that confusion of ideas which is found to hang on the popular schemes; and may reasonably solace ourselves in that revelation, which affords the human mind a truly divine refreshment, as it is attempering and forming itself upon apostolical instructions.—

We may now take a retrospect of what we have attempted: and it is, to have shewn in the first discourse, that the religion of Jesus, has in it a simplicity, harmony, and unity of principles: and that this unity is an irrefragable proof of its
divine

74 *On the Universality of Gospel-Teachings.*

divine original.—That next to its unity, is its unmixed purity, having nothing of human invention in its whole plan; which is a farther powerful argument of its divinity. And thirdly, that as it appears manifestly calculated to be the *universal* canon of heavenly instruction to mankind, it cannot fail to convince and persuade every honest mind of the completeness and conclusiveness of its internal evidence.

So true it is, that the inspired New Testament writings “are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

On the Supernatural Conception of Jesus Christ.

A
SUPPLEMENTAL DISCOURSE,
ON THE
SUPERNATURAL CONCEPTION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

Supplemental Discourse

ON THE
SUPERNATURAL CONCEPTION
OF
JESUS CHRIST.

A
DISCOURSE
DELIVERED
AT THE
CHURCH OF ST. MARY
IN THE CITY OF BOSTON
ON SUNDAY MORNING
MAY 10th 1808
BY
J. C. COLEMAN
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH

ON THE

SUPERNATURAL CONCEPTION

OF

JESUS CHRIST.

On the supernatural Conception of Jesus Christ.

I Presume it will not be thought impertinent, to add a discourse upon the supernatural conception of Jesus Christ; since it confirms the prophetic-testimony of his being the seed promised to Abraham, in whom all nations should be blessed; and is a full and express accomplishment of a prophecy, which *Isaiab* delivered about 700 years before his birth: the which we have *Is. vii. 13, 14.*
“ And he said, hear ye now, O house of David,
“ is it a small thing with you to weary men? but
“ will you weary my God also? Therefore the
“ Lord himself shall give you a sign,—behold a
“ virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall
“ call his name IMMANUEL.—Butter and honey
“ shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the
“ evil, and choose the good: for before the child
“ shall know to refuse the evil and choose the
“ good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be
“ forsaken of both her Kings.”

Since the prophetic-testimony must be from God, it will demand our religious attention. For so says the oracle, “ Remember the former things
“ of old, for I am God, and there is none else;
“ I am God, and there is none like me: declaring
“ the end from the beginning, and from ancient
“ times the things that are not yet done.”—
Is. xli. 9, 10.

Bishop

Bishop Chandler observes of my text, that it is one of the five which have been charged with unfaithfulness in the application of them to the Messiah. Nevertheless, St. Matthew having related the wonderful formation and birth of Christ, tells his readers of the Jewish nation, that God of old had prepared their fathers for giving credit to the great event; "All this, *says he*, was done, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by "the prophet, *behold a virgin shall conceive,*" &c. the Bishop thus remarks upon it, "the occasion "of the message by Isaiah was, *Ahaz* king of Judah "being in the utmost distress, at the boasted "invasion of his capital city, from the kings of "Syria and Israel. To comfort Ahaz, the prophet is sent to tell him, that the counsels and "attempt should prove ineffectual. And in assurance that he spake in God's name, he offers "the king his choice of any other sign, either "in the depth, or in the height above.—It appears from the answer, that Ahaz was fullen, "and that he and his counsellors despised the "prophet and distrusted God.—Since Ahaz "refused to ask any sign which God had offered "to give him, the prophet is instructed to "declare, God will give him one without asking; "yet it should neither be in the heavens, nor "from the depth: but it should be a sign, or "token to him and his people, of the birth of "a great personage, in whom all the promises "of God should have their full accomplishment. "Accordingly the prophet says, *Hear ye now,* "O house of David," * &c.

I should paraphrase the prophetic message thus,
—"The Lord himself shall give you a sign,
"token,

* See Bishop Chandler's Defence, &c. ch. iv. sec. 11.

“ token, or earnest, that behold a virgin shall
 “ conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be
 “ called Immanuel. q. d. You are afraid lest the
 “ line of David should be extinguished, from
 “ which the promised Messiah is to descend ; but
 “ it shall not. For even of a virgin of that very
 “ family shall he be born. And that you may more
 “ fully credit the prediction, God shall graciously
 “ vouchsafe to give you an unexpected national
 “ deliverance ; a sign of which, the Lord himself
 “ affords you by the child which is now in mine
 “ hand, *shear-jashub*, who shall eat butter and honey,
 “ i. e. he shall partake of plenty, your land being
 “ freed from hostile invasions, even before he
 “ shall know to refuse the evil and choose the
 “ good ; so that the land about which thou so
 “ much distressest * thyself, shall be rid of both
 “ the hostile kings.” — Thus, I understand, the
 prophet’s son, was to be the sign or earnest to them
 of the certainty of that future event, of a virgin’s
 having a son, who should be called Immanuel.

Should it be objected to the above interpretation
 of the prophecy, “ that a promise made of what
 “ should be done in some future age, was, by no
 “ means, an apt measure of exciting and fixing
 “ the faith and confidence of a people in the pro-
 “ mise of a near deliverance from their enemies.”

I would reply, this was not at all within the
 design of the prophetic message. Yet, the near
 accomplishment of a promise of deliverance made
 to a nation, was divinely adapted to establish their
 faith,

* N. B. The Hebrew word rendered *abhor*, is translated,
grieve, Exod. i. 12. And *distressed*, Numb. xxii. 3. Vid.
 Poli Synops. in loco.

faith, and enliven their hope in the promise of a more remote salvation.

To proceed, the prophet when speaking of the fulfilment of the promise which had respect to the everlasting covenant made with David, he useth the word *ALMA*, rendered virgin; which learned men have shewn, does always signify in the Hebrew scriptures, *a woman who has not known a man*. And even the Greek translators before Christ, who were not interested in the controversy, and who knew much better the signification of Hebrew words than any Jew has done since their last dispersion, do so render *Alma* in this very place*. And any one may see, that after such a pompous introduction, the prophet must have greatly mocked his hearers, had he meant no more than that *a young woman should be with child*.

Thus this remarkable prophecy, will perfectly well account for a notion prevalent among the Jews, of the supernatural birth of their Messiah, of which some specimen shall be given, by and by;—at the same time, it is not at all probable, that they could have any political purposes to serve, under such an expectation.

Thus much shall suffice as a sort of comment on the prediction. In further treating upon it, the following method may be observed;

I. I shall investigate the ground of certainty, with which the prophecy has an application to the Messiah.

II. Shew,

* *Ιδου ἡ παρθένος ὃν γαστήρ ληψεται, virgineus intactus.*

II. Shew, in what sense the word *Immanuel* is only applicable to Christ Jesus.

III. Point out the evil which there is in infidelity.

As to the ground of certainty on which such application should be made of the prophecy, we shall find the New Testament accounts of the birth of Christ, in perfect harmony. For the Evangelists Matthew and Luke, who clearly understood the meaning of the prophet Isaiah, do, both of them, expressly report the virgin Mary's conception of Jesus to have been supernatural; which they would not have done, without conclusive evidence. Accordingly the two first chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, are filled with narratives which support the credibility of the fact. e. g. The preternatural conception of the Messiah's harbinger, by his mother Elizabeth, who had been barren till her old age, much beyond the time of child-bearing, according to the course of nature. The Evangelist informing us, that Zacharias and Elizabeth were both *aged in their days* *; and that an Angel first announced the preternatural conception to Zacharias, whilst officiating in his priestly office, at the altar of incense; who himself was persuaded, that his own advanced age as well as his wife's, forbad such expectation. *Luk. i. 18.* That historian also affirms, it was the very same angel *Gabriel*, who announced to the virgin Mary her supernatural conception. *v. 31.* In both cases he is represented as foretelling, besides

* Καὶ ἀποφθονοὶ ὡς ἐν ἡλικίᾳ αὐτῶν ἦσαν.
Luk. i. 7.

sides their sex, the high offices and appointments of the two children.

Upon Mary's visit to Elizabeth, they are both so inspired, as to offer up praises to God for the honour done them, of the one being made the mother of the harbinger, and the other of his prince, the Messiah. These gratulatory songs of praise, St. Luke records, and also gives us an account of a multitude of angels who appeared to the shepherds, announcing to them the birth of the Messiah, ascribing praises to God in the highest; after which he mentions the sacrifice that was made in the temple, by which Mary's first-born was sanctified to the Lord; immediately both Simeon and Anna upon seeing the infant Jesus, utter songs of praise, under a divine impulse.

Now when these concomitants of the supernatural conception are well considered, and carefully compared with the narrative, which St. Matthew has recorded of the angelic informations to Joseph, Mary's espoused husband; we are constrained either to give full credit to the fact, or else to reject these evangelical narratives, as fabulous and incredible.

The argument might be farther urged from the congruity or agreement which this supernatural conception has with the measures God had early taken to render the line of the promise conspicuous: since it was by no other than a preternatural conception, that Isaac the son of the promise was given to Abraham, he having received him, as it were from the dead, when he was born of Sarah. See *Heb.* xi. 9. compare *Gen.* xvii. There was therefore a manifest agreement in the supernatural concep-

conception of the promised seed; and not any thing of the least difficulty, to a people well acquainted with the history of the father of their nation. Nay, even the apostle Paul has laid so great emphasis upon Abraham's faith in the preternatural conception of Isaac, that he says, it was accounted to him for righteousness. See Rom. iv. 19—22.

And as to the promise given to Abraham, *that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed:* Gen. xxii. 18, neither Jew nor Christian, have with any evidence, denied that this was to be applied to the Messiah. The *son of Sirach* so understood it, who says, "because Abraham was found faithful, God assured him by an oath, that he would bless the nations in his seed." Ecclus. xlv. 21. And both St. Peter and Paul apply that promise to the Christians Lord, Acts iii. 25, 26. Gal. iii. 8. From these views of the Abrahamic covenant, the supernatural conception of Jesus opens upon us with all the evidence of certainty, as well as of congruity and propriety. Compare Luke i. 73.

Neither have we yet collected the whole of the evidence; for St. Paul is wont to speak of the man Christ Jesus, as having had a distinguished formation. So he tells the Galatians, "that in the fulness of time, he was made of a woman." Gal. iv. 4. And that in his humiliation, when he consented to be divested of the miraculous powers conferred on him, and which wrought by him throughout his public ministrations, "he was then found in fashion as a man, seized by the hands of violence." Phil. ii. 8. To the Corinthians he is represented as the second Adam, because he had no other father but God: and

because of his superiority to the first Adam, who was of the earth, earthy, he is said to be the Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. xv. 45—50.—compare *ver.* 25.

Let us now proceed to adduce the testimony of Jewish writers. And the above-mentioned Bishop *Chandler* cites three or four Rabbies who say, that the birth of the Messiah must be extraordinary. “The Messiah is the seed that shall come from another place, i. e. he shall have another principle of generation.” Others say, “the birth of Christ alone shall be without any defect; his birth shall not be like that of other creatures into the world; none shall know his father before he tells it; the Redeemer that shall come shall be without a father,” And Rabbi *Joses* says, on Ps. lxxxv. 12, “The generation of the Messiah shall be singular, and not like that of creatures generating in the world; none shall know the name of his father, till he comes to declare it*.” With which accounts the opinion of the Jews corresponds; see *John* vii. 27.

We cannot therefore wonder that several *impostors* should pretend to have been born of virgins. “It was thus that Simon Magus would have it, that his mother Rachel bore him whilst a virgin, and before she co-habited with her husband Antony. And that Domitian, the son of Vespasian, would be thought to have been the son of Minerva.” So Virgil compliments Augustus, by telling him, “That the child of which his wife was pregnant, would be the beloved son, and great offspring of Jupiter.”

What-

* Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 337.

Whatever then may or can be said, these are open, full, undeniable evidences of the supernatural conception of Jesus; and are in satisfactory proof of his having been born of a virgin.

Should it, however, be objected, "that only two Evangelists mention the supernatural conception?"—

I would answer, perhaps there is not one of the four evangelical historians, but what has sundry narratives peculiar to his record. And we are well assured, that both St. Luke and St. John have many reports which are not found in the other Evangelists. But must we therefore reckon those reports or narratives less credible? Pray, who would part with the parable of the prodigal, because only mentioned by one Evangelist? Or, with the discourses which our Lord had with Nicodemus, and the woman of Samaria? Who would give up the sermon on the mount, because mentioned only by two? It is enough that we are satisfied these historians were divinely qualified for making their distinct written records: in this confidence, not one of them will lose a whit of their great importance with us.

Another argument might be alleged in favour of the evangelical account given of this great event of the supernatural conception, and that is, had it been omitted, the history of our Lord's entrance into being would have been less complete and perfect than that of many others; inasmuch as the historical records of several characters of old, such as that of Isaac, of Jacob, of Joseph, Samson and Samuel, were so distinguishing, as may be seen, Gen. xvii. 16, 17. ch. xxy. 21. ch. xxx. 22, 23. Judges, 13th chapter, 1 Sam.

ist chapter; which five instances, were of children preternaturally given, in consequence of a promise from God made to barren women. Consequently, there would have been a less perfect account of the origination of Jesus Christ, than had been given of those distinguished characters.

Here let me notice a strange opinion of a defender of revelation, who would have it, "that Jesus Christ could not be a perfect man, if not begotten by an human father and mother, in the usual sense of the words, *son of man*, throughout the Bible.*"

We are ready to acknowledge, he was not the son of man, by ordinary generation, as other men are: but to say, that for this reason he could not be a perfect man, would be the same thing as to deny that either Adam was a perfect man, or Eve a perfect woman.—However, the same gentleman tells us, "that Jesus does so often call himself *the son of man*, in order to prevent any idolatrous ideas and notions of him, as it had been the wont of the pagan world to deify their heroes."

Upon which, I would thus reason; had it been notorious that our Lord was the product of an ordinary generation, he must have had much less occasion to guard the people against such idolatrous notions, than he would upon his being the offspring of a supernatural conception; since this

* See the scripture account of the attributes and worship of God, and of the character and offices of Jesus Christ, p. 148. Printed for Noon, 1750.

this would furnish a cogent reason for his so guarding mankind against the idolatrous opinion.

Thus much for the certainty with which the application of this prophecy is made to the Messiah.

We are *secondly*, to shew in what sense the name Immanuel is applicable only to Jesus Christ.—And the word, our translators have rendered, *God with us*; but Erasmus, perhaps with as much reason, has rendered it, *God with him*. And if that should be the true sense, we may conclude St. Peter had it in his eye, when he gave this account of Jesus of Nazareth, that God anointed him with power, who went about doing good, for, *God was with him*. Acts x. 38.

We are very sure, the word of God did reside with the man Christ Jesus, as in a tabernacle: or, the presence of God was so with him, that whoever has seen him, has seen the Father; i. e. he has seen all that is to be seen of him, viz. all his truth and all his grace. And hence the name Immanuel is applicable to him, and to him only. And in fact, he has undoubtedly made the fullest and clearest revelation that ever was made of the will of God. In and by him God has made, or rather has *finished* the ages*; in other words, has compleated the plan of his providence, and in him all the promises of God are accomplishing, throughout the revolutions of time.

And moreover, as God has exalted him to the right hand of power, and made him the vital and governing head of his church; having given him

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a name

* Δι ου ης της αιωνος επονησεν. Heb. i. 2.

a name above every name ! by raising mankind to the hopes of eternal life under his administration ; from these high appointments we see the propriety of applying to him the name IMMANUEL.

The before-mentioned Bishop seems to me, to have widely mistaken, when he imagines that *Isaiab* would be understood to say, that a son to be born of his wife should be called by this name. For I can find in the text no son to be so called, but the son of a virgin ; which could not be the son of the prophet's wife. And I conclude, no other son of the prophet's is mentioned but *Shear-jashub*, a child already born, and now in his arms.

There is a remarkable marginal reading of this message—" Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son ; and thou, O virgin, shalt call his name Immanuel ;" which is the language of a future event, that could not relate to any son of *Isaiah's*.

We are in the next place, to point out the evil of Infidelity. The prophet says, " Is it a small thing for you to weary men ? but will you weary my God also ?"—Observe, the Hebrew word rendered *weary*, is translated *grieve*, Job iv. 2. and Prov. xxvi. 15 *. And there must be something extremely displeasing in the idea of a rational accountable creature obstinately rejecting divine evidence ; inasmuch as a deplorable depravity is what obstructs the mid-day light of truth. It even grieves and distresses a generous human

* Vid. Taylor's Heb. Concord. No. 923.

human breast, to see a fellow-creature wilfully shutting his eyes, and stupidly refusing the light of life; whatever may have been the motive that gave a dislike to the exercise of reason, and to the divine lead of truth and goodness.

Here we might aptly remark, there are two demonstrative evidences of a mission or message being from God, *viz.* prophecy and miracles. Under past dispensations, I should suppose, these have usually been found in connexion. The prophets of old must have had a miracle-working power, present sign or token, in order to excite attention, and secure credit to their predictions *. It seems very plain that Isaiah had such power, because he bid Ahaz ask a sign either in the depth, or in the height above. Which surely he would not have done, unless he had been empowered to gratify him. All the heralds of heaven had the badge of some divine signs, whereby unpossessed minds might easily distinguish them from impostors. *Spencer on Vulgar Proph. p. 61.*

Both prophecy and miracle do bear testimony to this great event of Christ's supernatural formation. Witness the prediction, together with the preternatural conception of the harbinger; for Zacharias foretold he should be struck dumb, as the sign given him, and upon the fulfilment he instantly recovered his speech:—compare also the inspiration of Elizabeth and Mary, with the astonishing circumstances which did attend their salutation! Now, when Deity has given such demon-

* Which seems to have been always expected from the Jewish prophets, and always performed by them. See Dr. Middleton's Examination of the Bishop of London's Discourses, &c. p. 41.

demonstration of a fact, and taken every proper measure which infinite wisdom and goodness could devise to convince and persuade of its truth; an obstinate refusal of credit must be very offensive in the eye of heaven. We conclude therefore much evil must be implied in infidelity.

But this will be yet more apparent, when it is considered, that after all the raillery which unbelievers have plentifully bestowed upon the supernatural conception, no more has yet been done than a display made thereby of prejudice, conceit, and vanity. For undoubtedly, there was in this event something worthy the interposition of Almighty power; an astonishing aptitude to convince and persuade; else it could have had no place in the divine scheme of manifestation. *Farther,*

There is, in fact, nothing to oppose to the record: for not any thing more incredible can be in the supernatural formation of Christ, than there was either in the formation of the first man, or in that of the first woman; or in the several preternatural conceptions. So that we, on the other hand, discover an amazing propriety in this distinguished formation, not only in fulfilment of prophecy, but in its so identifying the person of the promised *Messiah*, as that it is rendered utterly impossible the honest enquirer should mistake his person. Nay, even the truth and faithfulness, the wisdom and goodness of God are made illustrious in that supernatural formation.—Let no one then forget how the prophet has censured the crime of infidelity.—“Is it a small thing that ye weary men? Will ye weary my God also?”

Some Reflections.

I. There is a superlative pleasure in reading the series of prophetic openings which have reference to the Messiah promised from the beginning! and yet it is deplorably fashionable, to neglect and despise the written volume of God's word. Men are accustomed to think they are not at all obliged to consult religiously the divine oracles: and even learn to persuade themselves, these sacred writings are of no importance. Various are the excuses they make, to quiet their own minds in this inattention. *Papists* they see are not allowed to consult the holy book. *Protestants* who are possessed of that privilege, do, great numbers of them, appear to be never the better for the liberty they have; many making no use of it;—and not a few perverting and abusing the manifest sense of its teachings. Nevertheless, those records of ages, which heaven has intended for the beneficial information of mankind, are of too great significance to be neglected with impunity. The oracular voice, is, “he that has ears, let him hear.”

To what, but to this contempt of the divine oracles, can we attribute the shocking impiety, and atrocious debauchery of the age! which has no taste either for knowing, or doing the will of God!

II. I might observe, from the supernatural conception of Jesus, that the *honour* done to his mother, was not in consequence of any personal merit; and cannot entitle her to any homage from mankind. There is no reason to doubt either

either of her innocence, or virtue; she appears to have been truly pious. But though she was the mother of Jesus, that gave her no more interest in the Gospel-salvation than any others had, who were but as careful to do the will of God as she was. This we may fairly infer from *Math. xii. 50. Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, — the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

III. It should appear from our Lord's supernatural formation, that he had no *prior* existence. All ancient prophecy speaks of him, as not yet having had any existence; but always as *he that was to come*. And St. Paul says, "it was *in the fulness of time*, that he was made of a woman.*" Some leud minds, I would here observe, have spoken with great levity on the declaration of the angel to Mary, "that the Holy Spirit should come upon her, and the power of the highest should over-shadow her." — But this angelic account of the supernatural formation of Jesus, is in perfect agreement with the Mosaic representation of the Spirit of God *moving* upon the face of the waters; and with the evangelic narration of its *hovering over* Jesus, at his baptism. The Hebrew word *rabhaph*, signifies to move, or agitate; as in *Genesis*, ch. i. 2. Buxtorf says, it alludes to the fluttering motion of the eagle's wings, when she would excite her young to fly. It evidently denotes, in St. Luke's account, a like exertion of the same creative power, that moved upon the chaotic waters. That fine definition given by St. Paul of the creation of this system,

* See the argument against the pre-existence, in the true New Testament doctrine of Jesus Christ considered.

system, is here applicable, viz, "The worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Just so was the origination of Jesus, in Mary's supernatural conception of him; which forbids our supposing any prior existence*.

IV. From hence we conclude his divine character and mission; and also that the message he delivered must be of the greatest importance to mankind. It is not supposable that such an *apparatus* of prophecy and miracle, should be without a design and end worthy of the adorable governor of universal nature, and deserving the religious attention of mankind. The revelation which he has made of the will of God, gives the reason of his being stiled *Immanuel*: for as it is the most perfect, so it must be the last revelation which shall ever be made to this world of ours. And because of this revelation, he is said to have shewn us the Father: and is also represented as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image or character of his person.

But to prevent mistake, though he is properly stiled *Immanuel*, not only from the revelation he has made of the mind and will of God, but as being constituted head over all things to the church of God; yet we are not to conceive of him as really and truly God. This he cannot be, because God by his spirit or power formed or made him of a woman. But whatever God has made, must be a creature. Whereas the one living and true God, is not capable of the shadow of change; and the idea of his becoming
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* See more on this subject in the *Appendix*.

an infant, is, beyond measure, shocking! *Tertullian* said, "he would not believe that the sovereign God descended into the womb of a woman, though even the scripture itself should affirm it.*" And we find our Lord, throughout his ministrations, constantly declaring, that the words he spake, and the works he wrought, were not by his own spirit or power; but by that of his father who sent him.

Lastly, we cannot but see ourselves under an indispensable obligation to reverence Jesus as the sent of God, by conforming ourselves religiously to those divine instructions which he has delivered to us in the New Testament canon.—It is allowed, that we may highly entertain ourselves, and take a refined pleasure in reading the amazing book of nature! We may take much delight in consulting the historical volume of providence. We may reap much advantage from conversing with the writings of inquisitive men, and derive considerable information from their experimental knowledge. Not a little is to be learnt from discoveries made by philosophic minds, who have, with great study and much accuracy, investigated nature's laws, and taken a comparatively extensive view of her latent treasures.—But, after all these laborious and entertaining researches, we are constrained to own, with admiration, that there are no such riches of divine wisdom and knowledge, to be any where found, as in the teachings of Jesus. For, verily, by him, God has *abounded* towards us in all wisdom and prudence! his teachings give the light of life, of immortal life!

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* See *Platonism unveiled* : Part 1. p. 8.

How aptly then did an apostle say, "whosoever
" shall confess that Jesus is the son of God—
" God dwelleth in him, and he in God—for this
" is the record, that God hath given to us eternal
" life, and this life is in his son. He that hath
" the son, hath life; but he that hath not the
" son of God, hath not life."

APPENDIX.

“son of God, hath not life.”
 “the son, hath life; but the that hath not the
 “life, and this life is in his hand: the that hath
 “is the reward, that God hath given to us eternal
 “God dwelleth in him, and he in God—for this
 “I shall comfort that Jesus is the son of God—
 “How apply then did an apostle say? “whosoever

APPENDIX.

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APPENDIX.

A

LETTER addressed to the ARIANS:

Occasioned by a late Publication of

Mr. MARTIN TOMKINS's Reply

TO

Dr. LARDNER's Letter on the Logos:

Fellow Christians,

I Begin with observing to you, that what Mr. Tomkins has advanced concerning the Logos; or that word of power by which God created the heavens and the earth, becoming the soul of the man Christ Jesus, appears to me to be very wide from the truth, and far from being defensible on any solid grounds. The idea of reducing an immensity of presence and power, an unquestionable divinity to the embryo-state, or to the narrow confinement of an infant human body, is, I frankly confess, beyond the utmost reach of my conceptions. Nor do I apprehend, that this idea has the least analogy or agreement, with any one image the mind of man can form, from comparing any manifestation God has made of himself, in his works, ways, or word. Indeed, it seems to stand in contradiction to truth, reason, nature, and revelation; for we are well assured, that the wise Creator has established a specific difference in the various orders of beings he has formed; and therefore cannot inform and actuate a real human

human body by the spirit of an angel, any more than by the spirit of an animal of the lowest order; forasmuch as this would destroy that specific difference which he has invariably established throughout all his works.

Mr. T. observes, that "if it should be made appear that the death of Christ carries in it an utter unconsciousness, he should make no scruple of supposing, that the *Logos* was for that time in a state of unconsciousness." Had he said no more than this, in defence of the Arian Hypothesis, my mind would have revolted; since I cannot suppose it agreeable to the divine constitutions, that God's well-beloved son, who, throughout his ministrations, had sustained *the form of God*, and at their finishing had commended his own spirit to him, should be reduced, even in *hades*, to a state of unconsciousness. If my ideas are right, a sincere habitual conformity to the will of God, is a life-principle in man, which death cannot injure: much less could it render unconscious the sinless, the perfectly obedient soul of Jesus, the brightest image of the Father's glory! At the same time, it would greatly increase the difficulties of the Arian Hypothesis, by its supposing the *Logos*, (an agent by which God made the worlds) reducible to a state of unconscious existence, were it but for a single moment.

As unaccountably does Mr. Tomkins speak of Christ's agony in the garden, and complaint on the cross.—His words are these,—“It is probable that the *devil*, in the temptations recorded, took him, as I may say, at the greatest advantage, when the circumstances he was in, made him more liable to the impressions of things then proposed to him.”—This, assuredly,
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is a very strange account of the matter. And he might have been much better informed from the mouth of Jesus, who, in the eve of his sufferings, said, *the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.* So far from taking any advantage of him, the prince of this world, whom Mr. T. calls the *devil*, when he came, could make no impression at all upon him.—Neither do I think our blessed Lord made any complaint whilst he hung on the cross. He indeed appeals to God, *as his God*, from the revilings of the chief priests, in proof of his knowing that God had not forsaken him.—*Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani.*

Mr. T. comments thus on Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. “Our Lord took the form of a servant, in his being made in the likeness of man.” ΕΝ ΟΜΟΙΩΜΑτι ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ ΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΟΣ. This is not intelligible, for unless he made himself, and made himself too in that likeness, there is no propriety in saying, *he took upon him* that form. Whereas one may easily conceive of his being made truly man, like to his brethren; and in that true humanity, we can consider him as consenting to take upon him the form of a servant; and also as willingly submitting to be treated as a criminal, suffering the ignominious death of a Roman slave, in his crucifixion.—But then, it is not possible we should conceive of any being God ever created, as either assenting or consenting to his formation. This would be to suppose the creature’s existence prior to itself. Neither can it be any mark of humiliation, or an expression of a creature’s humility, to be made what it is. One might farther argue, that to be made in the likeness of man, is no proof of his having the form of a servant, in the humiliating sense, if we can believe either Moses, or St. Paul. Moses says, God made man in his

own image, after his own likeness, and gave him dominion. Gen. i. 26. And St. Paul says, that man is the image and glory of God! 1 Cor. xi. 7.

My surprize is not in the least abated, by that worthy man (whom I loved) thus expressing his ideas of the *exalted* Jesus,—“ he is now considered, not as in a state of subjection even to the father; but as invested with supreme authority, deputed indeed, but, as it should seem, not under direction, neither is he accountable.” If this can be justly said of the man Christ Jesus, I must own a total ignorance of all first principles which concern the law of relation; as well as of all those representations made of him by apostles.—In the reason and nature of things, by the laws of immutable eternal truth, all beings that are originated must be dependent, none can have independence but the one God, who has none besides him. Again, Christ’s investiture with supreme power from the Father, undoubtedly infers his dependence. He is only capable of performing the functions of his high office, by virtue of God’s presence with him. For it is God’s throne at the right hand of which the Father hath placed him. Heb. xii. 2.—

As to that phrase, 1 Cor. xv. 28. *Then shall the son himself also be subject*, this no way proves he is not under direction, nor accountable, during his mediatorial administration, or that he is any other than the Shechinah of God, invested with the Father’s glory, See Matth. xvi. 27. Mar. viii. 38. —At the end of which administration, he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. Or, it may perhaps be understood of the children of the kingdom being pre-

presented to the Father, as an heave-offering, after they have been with him to behold the glory which the Father hath given him. Joh. xvii. 24. But does not St. Paul say, that the name given him above every name, to which every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess him Lord, *shall be to the glory of God the Father?* And if so, is there not an *end* to which he is to conduct his government? A full proof that he is neither without direction, nor in a state of non-subjection. Indeed Mr. T. owns he is a deputy—*deputed indeed*: But who of mankind ever had an idea of a deputy, that was neither under direction, nor accountable?

I shall only notice another text, about which mode of expression Mr. T. is extremely sanguine, and is confident it clearly determines the pre-existence of Christ, and that is, John xvi. 28. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father.* He lays much stress on the [παλιν αφιστημι.] I have the pleasure of observing, that an ingenious writer has shewn* the word here rendered *world*, is to be considered only as a scene of business, exercise and trial; he supports this sense, by John xiv. 19. xv. 18. xviii. 9, and 18. 1 John iii. 1. I would add, John xviii. 37. “For this end was I born, and for this cause *came* “*I into the world*, that I might bear witness to “the truth;” where, coming into the world, manifestly signifies, his entering on public business, as the great prophet of God, to reveal his will to mankind.

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* Theological Repository, No. III. Vol. III. paper signed, LIBERIUS.

The above text will then read thus, *I came forth from the Father*, i. e. I had my divine credentials from him;—and *am come into the world*; i. e. have engaged in a scenery of business, exercise and trial. — *Again I leave the world, and go to the Father.* This literally and exactly agrees with what he had said, verses 16, 17. “A little while and ye shall not see me; and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.” Accordingly, he left them and all the scenery of business when he was crucified, and went into hades for part of three days; during which little while they saw him not. And again they should see him for a little while, i. e. during the forty days he conversed with them, and more fully instructed them in things pertaining to the kingdom of God,—after which he left them a second time to go to the Father. These are the two leavings of the *world*, considered as a scene of business. And every one may see, that his *coming forth from the Father*, has the most important meaning, of his receiving his credentials from him, by which he was qualified for coming into the world, and dispatching the business of his public ministry. Here is a natural and easy sense of that declaration, but no intimation at all of his pre-existence.—At least, this is the opinion of one unattached to any system, but those of reason and revelation.



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